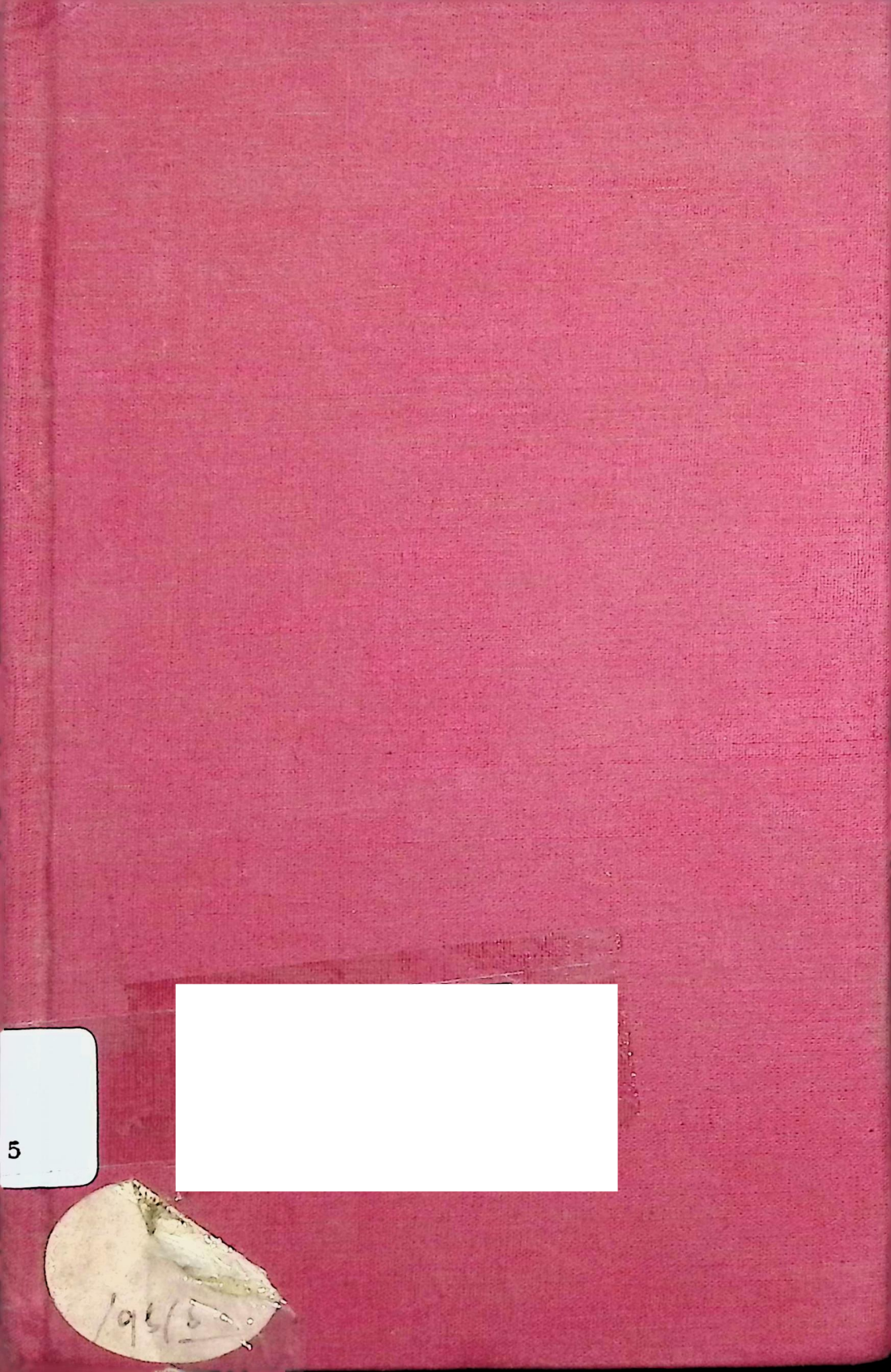

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IN ORIENTAL AND INDOLOGICAL STUDIES

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BY

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PARIMAL PUBLICATIONS

DELHI-11 0007

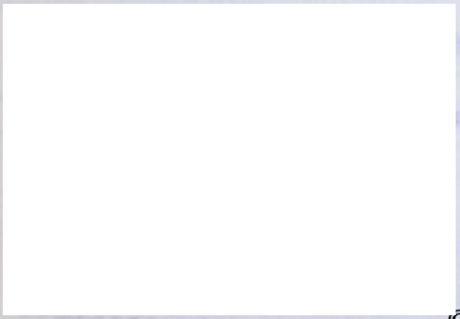
Published by

PARIMAL PUBLICATIONS

27/28, SHAKTI NAGAR

DELHI 110007 (India)

Phone: 7127209



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First Edition 1998

ISBN : 81-7110-148-4

PRICE Rs. 500

Laser typesetting and Printing

Himanshu Laser System, 46, Sanskrit Nagar, Rohini Sect. 14, Delhi 110085, Phone : 7862183

Preface

The research papers presented by me during 1985-1996 in national and international forums are now published in the book form titled researches in Oriental and Indological Studies. Discussion on these themes takes place within the compass of chapters into two parts. Most of the papers contain all information that can be extracted from the written *Puyas*/sacred texts and evidences. I have attempted to imbibe the best of the study of Manipuri sources and the scientific equipment of a modern professor and Indologist. The love of sacred Manipuri texts are reflected in every line of these papers.

Except the Chapters II, X, XI and Famous Indologists and part II Oriental to this volume (the visit to Japan and Thailand in which) I have written after my visit the rest of the chapters are the series of my papers (15 in number) appeared in the form of abstracts in the proceedings of ISCA, IPC, AIOC and 2 papers on *Samaveda* and *Atharvaveda* presented and accepted for presentation in the Vedic seminars sponsored by International Foundation for Vedic Education, New Jersey-07065, USA, Seminar on Indo-Nepal relations (Kathmandu). Seminar paper on Influence of *Shaktism* in the literature of N. E. India sponsored by Regional Sahitya Academy, Calcutta at Gauhati, and a public lecture delivered by me on Sanskritisation of Myanmar in the prestigious organisation of Asia– the Asiatic Society on January 10, 1994.

I put on record my thanks to the Sectional Presidents of Anthropology and Archaeology Section of IDCA (1980-1996) and local Secretaries of All Indian Oriental Conferences for their respective sessions of these years in connection with the production of my abstracts/summaries of papers in their volumes. Full length papers of the chapters IV, VI, VIII, X, XI and XII appeared in the following journals and edited volumes *Eikhoigi Shaktam* Ed. by N. Gambhir Singh, *Lamnue Thanbi Quarterly*, ed. by Dr. S. Raghumani Mangang, *Legis News* Ed. by the Secretary of Manipur Legislative Assembly, *Frontier Chronicle* Ed. by N. Tombi Singh, *The Indian Family* a book Ed. by Dr. K.K. Chakravarti, IAS, Director, Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal, in 1994. I am specially grateful to Dr. Kalyan Kumar Chakravarti, respected Director who invited me to write a paper for his volume and get it published in his book in connection with the International Family year and thus became a great source of encouragement for me in the world of Ethnology and Anthropological Sciences. Most of the titles included in this volume have been changed and slightly altered in the light of new concrete based data

and interactions. The second part comprises essays on Myanmar/Burma, Nepal, Thailand/Siam and Japan.

My research has been extended over these years on account of my participation in many International and National Conferences/Seminars and visit to Japan, Thailand, Myanmar (5 times) and Nepal. In every year I made it a point to prepare papers for Indian Philosophical Congress, Anthropology and Archaeology Section of ISCA, All India Oriental Conferences, etc. in addition to regional and local writings and lectures in N.GOs. like N.R.C., Diamond Club, State Archives Department, Legis News of Assembly of the State and Co-operative Departments of Manipur. At present, Manipuri studies have generated great interest among the young scholars engaged in historical, cultural, linguistic and literary aspects for Ph.D. and project works, The author's observations and reflections can be no more in doubt in view of his love for research and ceaseless investigations. Manipuri studies occupy an important place in Indian and south-east Asian culture and plays key roles in Oriental and Indological studies from the point of view of Ethnology, Archaeology and Culture. The striking part of that we know about Manipur's contribution to the civilisation of the world is made through Manipuri Dance, Polo, martial arts and sports. Unfortunately considerable difficulties in the form of insurgent activities in the States. Ethnic clashes, etc., obstruct journey to the conferences and world meets. I journeyed to the Myanmar region in the seventies and eighties just before and during the military regime when great upheavals take place in Myanmar politics and I also studies Indo-Myanmar trade agreements primarily in the free trade zone areas of the two States.

I am grateful to the Manager, Parimal Publication, Delhi for the interest in the printing of this work due to which my work has been made available to the public in the book form efficiently. Further its quality is enhanced by the inclusion of the same in its well-known series of Indology.

I am also thankful to my young friends who helped me in carrying out the typing copy for the press. I am equally grateful to my wife Dr. Mrs. Asha Lakshman Prasad Gupta, M.Sc., M.Ed., PH.D. D.Sc. (Moscow), Assit. Professor in Life Science, Manipur University, my daughter Anjali Devi (Baby Rika Rani) and relatives who have helped me in one way or the other for my venture in various matters. I owe to them much more than I can express. If this work succeeds in contributing even an iota in the direction of serving the interest of Manipur and its people, I will feel more than satisfied.

Dr. M. Kirti Singh,
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PART 1

1

PURANIC PUYA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE STABILITY OF MANIPURI SOCIETY

The Puranas are recast and recomposed during the Gupta period (330-375 A.D.). In the opinion of Bipin Chandra Pal, the Vedas are the thesis, the Upanishads are the anti thesis and the Puranas are the synthesis. The puranas combine the best in thesis and anti-thesis according to the law of Dialectics. The aim is to meditate the profound recondite truth of the Vedas and the Upanishad to the understanding of the masses in view of the differences. The popularisation of Hindu dharma which began with the two epics was completed by the popular stories and concrete examples of the puranas. In point of fact they are the real Bible of the common people and the source of Sanskrit and the vernacular literature of India.

A typical Hindu purana is supposed to deal with cosmopoly, creation at the beginning of each kalpa, genealogies of gods, the ages of the world and dynasties of kings. They describe the 4 (four) ages (Yugas) and their characteristics. None of the purana is fulfilling these characteristics; some contain more than these, while others touch these. There is another opinion according to which a Maha puranas (Major puranas) has to satisfy to characteristics which includes 5 (five) more copies viz. means or livelihood, incarnations of gods, liberation, unmanifest Jiva, Brahman/Absolute. Maha Mahapadhyaya Haraprasd sastri further observes that any thing old may be the content of a Purana and it covers all aspects of life. The entire ground traversed by the puranas are dynamic and floating and has no fixity of contents. There have been numerous interpolations, and modifications was later periods in the interest of the sects or compilers which appropriated them to themselves. There is not much advance in philosophical thought in these lengthy treatises except the extension of the theory of Avataras (Incarnation), glorification of a particular cult as also with the dissolution and preservation of the world and of the concept of shakti (divine power personified as the mother goddess and tantric form of a worship/later phases of Shaktism).

According to another observation, the sectarianism which is in the mild form in the epics become more pronounced in the puranic period with the result that we have a sort of sectarian monotheism intolerant to other faiths. This view, we shall examine in the body of this paper. There are 18 (eighteen) Mahapuranas written in beautiful Sanskrit verse. The Bhagavata purana is the purana Ratna/the 5th Veda and the scripture of the

Vaishnavas. There are also other volumes known as upa-puranas/anti puranas 18 in number. The Puranas in Manipuri context may be categorised under this characteristic. The names, periods and characteristics which have come down to us of which may have appeared in print in Bengali script will be discussed in proper places.

Subjects/scope of the Mahapuranas-Religious cults, stories, modes of worship, astrological matters, kind of sin and expiation, vratas, tirthas, music, dance, fruits herbs plants, animals, snakes, treatment of snakes, tiger bites, sculpture, drawing, social organisation, ends of life, prominent stotras, important messages are dealt with. Though one deity is raised to the position of a supreme deity. the worship of other deities is not denounced. The puranas have given passages in favour of other deities.

Influence of Puyas in Manipuri life

The influence exerted by the sacred Lore is almost incalculable. It has permeated all aspects of life. It is in the form of a dialogue between the teacher and the student, maichou and Mainou. In the opinion of Dr. S.K. Chatterji the Meitei *Puyas* are Puranas Aprocrypha and not upapuranas which mean that the *Puyas* written from the legends and traditions of the Meitei people have puranic character, but which still remain outside the well-known or canonical works. These stories are widely current and are thought to be infallible, although they are outside all-India purana canon. The *Puyas* are existing side by side with the Sanskrit puranas.

As the Arts and traditional sciences have always been pressed into the service of religion and spirituality, it is not surprising that a number of *Puyas* should deal authoritatively with such subjects as epigraphy, archaeology weaving, dancing, House building and treatment of illness. The *Puyas* written in Meitei script and Meitei language as well as in Bengali and Sanskrit/Nagari script and language. The *Puyas* fashioned the living culture of the Meitei and their social life. To the religious and cultural awakening of the Meitei, which all earnest minds are hoping for the *Puyas* have a definite contribution to make.

Puyas Vs Puranas

The Manipuri Puya (pu = genetic track,ya = collection of materials is thought to correspond to the Sanskrit word purana. The meaning of puwari/puya seems to have been the sacred law or texts of the ancestor's-story of the grandfather, father through whom my blood came. The Tai/Shan word pu means a source of existence or spring. The puya contains most of the oldest materials handed down by local uses, oral tradition which had already found their way into the codes of law, customs of the state and the institution as approved by the ruling king. They have copied many *Puyas* since the development of Meitei scripts and great deal of the kings and record keeping on the public and the private individuals took place. Therefore there are many mss under the same name, none write external variations.

The *Puyas* are too many as they cover-up vamsabali or a chronicles of a particular surname. Any missing link in the genealogy of a surname cab be found out and corrected by consulting *Puyas* in an assembly of family members of a specific surname or a group. Not a single member of another group is allied in the meeting except the puya specialists/Maichous. The gathering sometimes took decision to haunt for *Puyas* with another migrated group of the same surname by correspondence or communication. The Meiteis are scattered in parts of Assam, U.P. Bengal, Myanmar (Burma)., etc.

Old *Puyas* are full of peculiar style of recording, working, lineage, bifurcation of lineage and later influence of Hinduism, Bengali and English are noticed. They are very particular about one's marriage, lineage, migration to another place and childlessness of a member. When a dispute arises they always say "show me ms where it's written in the authoritative record like *Puyas*."

Some scholars again make a distinction between the puranas by which the Hindu tales ans stories and the *Puyas* sacred law of the Meiteis which are infallible and which provide the equipment to have a direct communion with God. The puranas revealed to the Maichous by Meitei God are strong reaction to Ramandi form of Hinduism popularised by Santidash Gosai of Sylhet with the patronage of Maharaj Garibniwaz, They differ in particular from the Hindu myths and tales, many of them of remarkable value. Some of them are not in line with the Hindu contents.

This view is not convincing. The discourse given by Mangang kuru (Guru) Punsiba to king Naothingkhong about the duties of a king and value of spiritual life startles us by it semblance to that of Hindu thought which expresses the same. Again most of the *Puyas* written after the 18th century are obviously modelled on the line of Hindu sacred texts like Bhagavata, the Gita, Satkarma of Vartyahari, Chanakya sloka etc. The garland of stotras in samkrit provide the model for the hymens/Laiwas, Mingkheirols of Sanamahi, Leimarel, Nongshaba, Marjing, etc. which are important and integral as a part of *Puyas*'s literature. Like the vaisnave saints, mystics and Rajarshis, of India with whom Manipuris had much in common, the chief influence in the vaishnava period was that of the Bhagavada, the Gita and the Geeta Govinda. Sanskrit and Indian culture has become a part of Manipuri being and life.

The *Puyas* in Meitei script before the Garibniwaz period cannot be attributed to any author although the classification and arrangement were done by the court Pandits (Maichou). Books prior to the 18th century are confused, undated and enoymous. In Meitei belief all subjects are included in the *Puyas* and so literature is voluminous. As they covered the origin of human life and successive stages and also the origin of the particular clan or surname. The approved *Puyas* of Manipur place enjoy authority and the pandits often cite quotations from them.

In reading and culturing the *Puyas* one must be cautious and must take note of injunctions, tradition, environment and conviction. There was the belief that a sacred book must be read and copied on auspicious days after taking bath. If read during the period of uncleanness (from bath, death of a relative) the misfortune must visit him. The *Puyas* are emphasising the point that the study of puya literature and rites must be through a teacher/Guru. Every priest has to approach a guru for *Boriba* (initiation of siksha). There is no progress for the uninitiated in their mind according to tradition. A few schorers have risen to essential because of hard about and training latest and patronage of the rule are essential for be to miss a great sahib or pandit.

The puranic lore is not open to all. It is limited to a student who was competent to do all the necessary formalities. Any indiscriminate reading of them may shorten the longevity of the reigning kind.

In the copper plate inscriptions issued by king, khongtekcha it is written thus-".....If any one opens this book (a purana is 721 shakabda) improperly, he will die of hematesis." The inscription informs us how to open the purana and at what time for reading.

Two instances of Puran/Puya Meithaba (Burning up of Puranas) in the History of Manipur

We are told of 2 cases of burning of scared Meitei texts (1) Maharaja Pamheiba in the 18th century and (2) the second by the British in 1991. The process of Hindunisation and Indianisation of Manipur was very active during the reign of Maharaja Pamheiba aliea Garibniwaz (1709-1749). A powerful Ramandi Tantrik monk from Nar Singh Tilla Akhara of Sylhet (now in Bangladesh) with his 2 disciples undertook the conversion of Manipur valley into the Ramanandi School. He was received with favour by the Maharaja and he induced the people to profess the Ramanandi faith although after Vaishnava Schools were also thriving in Manipur. Maharaja Pamheiba is better known as Garibniwaz– a title offered by the Muslim of the west to his for his kindness to the poor, hospitality, compassion and sympathy. It is said that the sons of Maharaja Garibniwaz came to be subsequently known as Shaha– the persian title. Like wise they were corrupted into Shais. Some scholars hold that Maharaja Garibiniwaz thought of taking Islamic faith to strengthen the position against the powerful Burmese powers. There is however no consensus of opinion as to whether he did not think of embracing an alien faith. It has formed a subject matter of great controversy as the Muslims were the subject or inferior community not strong to influence the Maharaja and the court. He was brought up in the Vaishnava environment during his father's time. It is wrong to suppose that he was a Naga by birth also (according to some scholars). All his sons, it should be remembered, were suffixed by the title Shais and not Shahs. On the contrary, Pamheiba and his sons showed the traits of marvellous personalities, which they were to attain in religion,

administration and love for the country. Manipur remained almost wholly free from Muslim influence and domination.

Obsessed by religious fanaticism the king at the instance of Shantidas Gosai decided to obliterate every trace of dessent from the new religion. Everything disobedient whether persons or writings, he sought to destroy. He thought to destroy every record of his fanaticism towards the old faith. About 121 *Puyas* (some say 220) in the possession of court scholars containing early faith and culture were collected and kept in a box and were committed to the flames in the Utra of Kangla capital. It was accomplished like the cremation of a dead person in a grave under the direction of Shantidash Gosai. There was little to prevent this act except a strong protest under Khongnanghtaba *Maichou*, Head Pandit of the palace. The kind stretched out his arms to crush all that refused to support his new work. It is said that some of the *Puyas viz. Nunglon*, *Pakhangba Nao-yown*, *Taoroinai Yangbi, Naoyom*, *Sagok Thirel*, etc. had flown away in different directions when the fan blew the flames of the *Yajna*. It was a great loss to the Meitei and never forgot this event because before the invention of printing-books were few in numbers and in a form not favourable for preservation. Santidash Gosai and his opponent Louremba Khongnangthabs were gifted with high spiritual power. Ramandi Missionary Santidas tendered his respectful apology. The incidents-sudden illness of Sanahal, the king's eldest son by chief queen at the time of breaking the status of God Sanamahi by order of the King, bad dreams of Shantidas Gosai and his contract of Ahorai/incurable disease after the burning of *Puyas* caused confusion and amazement about the spiritual power of the Meitei Pandit, Sanctity of the shrines and holy scriptures. The people acted on the divine mandate. He advised the king to lose no time in reinstalling the broken idols, rewriting the sacred *Puyas* from memory and to identify Hindu god and goddesses with those of Meitei Gods and Goddesses.

As a result of the religious reform, the use of Meitei script, songs in Vernacular language and circulation of Meitei *Puyas* were prohibited by his successors. The people were forbidden to use, read and use them in their houses. Pilgrimage to Hindu sacred places, acts of penance, meditation, kirtan, the erection of Hindu temples, offering of fund to the temples— were enjoined by order of the king.

The Manipuris were among these people of India to obtain the translation of the epics in .Manipuri language and Hindu books on astrology. The intoxicated Vaishnavas possessed the Vaishnava scriptures in manuscript in Bengali language and script. During his time *Shrimad Bhagavatam* were opened to Manipur. He had placed in the hands of the Manipuris a light which should never be extinguished. The art of printing being still unknown it was only by slow and troublesome labour that copies of *Shrimad Bhagavata* could be multiplied. So great was the interest to see the cantos of *Shrimad Bhagatam* that Manipuris willingly engaged in

looting the copy from the Tripuris and listening to the disclosure from an expert.

The revivalist group of Manipur did not forget the burning of the *Puyas* and the mass conversion of the Meiteis into Ramandi cult after a bath in Lilong river during his reign. This day was fixed upon for Nonkhrang Ihanba(reversal to the old practice). The place was thronged with the followers of revivalist cult. They even went to the length of burning some Hindu sacred books on this day and resolve to desanskritise the culture of Meiteis.

Evaluation– It is necessary to proceed a little what were the *Puyas* burnt down by king Pamheiba. The teaching upon this point has been obscured and perverted by the errors of popular tradition and slogan of the people. The anti-Indianisation trend has prepared the way for this extreme view. It is said that the king collected and dedicated all *Puyas* (old literature) to flames. Here they mistake. King Panheiba burnt down the *Puyas* concerning black magic, tantrism, primitive religion and *Puyas* connected with blood lines of the ruling family and not all types. Manipuri practices of worship, rites, etc., differ less widely from Hinduism than in pre-Garibniwaz periods. *Puyas* and mode of writing *Mingourols* and *Laihuis* resemble much of puranic Hinduism that now exists because of a curious synthesis and amalgamations. The Bamon/Brahmans worship Sanamahi(household duty) in their house with incense, candle, etc.

Second burning of the Puyas by the British

There is already production of Books, ballads, dramas and critical essays on the Anglo-Manipuri War, 1891 and yet the flow continues. The war which means the defeat of the Manipuris by the British was decisive in changing the face and fate of the Meiteis. The Meiteis are fervent votaries at the shrine of ruling dynasty. The monarch was their god; the sacred texts are infallible.

The murder of 6 Englishmen by the Manipuris with the sanction of holy *Puyas* near the *Kanglasha* (Dragon) offended the victorious Britishers deeply. It was impossible for the mighty British to stomach the traditional killing of them and putting their blood on the mouth of *Kanglasha* (Dragon) according to their magical belief. Colonel Maxwell, the P.A. in Manipur unable to bear the cruel act destroyed the brick of Kanglasha by firing near the palace gate. Likewise the *Puyas* had served as the court of the Meitei resurgence and unification. It is a fact of recorded history that the British authority recognised a minor boy of 5 years, Churachand Singh as the Maharaja after consultation with Sarangpandit, the Chief of the court. That they caused a heap of 140 *Puyas* written in Meitei script to be consigned to flames out of anger as the Britishers had been killed with the prophecy of the *Puyas*. S Gourihari Singh wrote "Books in Meitei scripts of different names were captured and consigned to high flames. The book burning kept Meetei mind in case. The ember stayed for full 45 days." The

saying-the white should lose their heads before the Kanglasha. There was a span of comment in many countries involving the Manipuris action and belief. Mahatama Gandhi had a poor opinion for the Meiteis about this incident.

However it must be noted that some enlightened Political agents of Manipur like Mr. Porteons, L.O. Clark, etc., encouraged Manipur writers to collect and print *Puyas*.

1. These insulting remarks of Ultra modern Manipuris or outsiders towards old literature and sacred lore pained the Indologists and are prepared to point out the utter hollowness of the bias assumptions. He can show what priceless gems of culture, literature and arts lay in the *Puyas* creations of Maichous (specialists in sacred lore) to substantiate the same. We may single out the sacred texts preserved in the Maharaja's court/Pandit Loisang. We may focuss our attention on such puranic personalities-Pakhangba, Poireiton, Khagemba, 7 *Maichous*/Gurus of Meitei culture, and figures like ideal men. The characters of *Puyas* or also of Hindu puranas are in their hearts for these being real for all time and clime. Who has not heard of the figures of Meitei and Hindu mythology record in the *korabaks* (old slate). The *Maibas* and *Maibis* worked eloquent over the importance of these heritages. Stories relating to their deeds are explained.

2. Rites de passages, rites and festivals all round the year, sacred places, rivers and mountains speak of Puya's influence. Cutting of naval chords, cremation practices and founding of institutions in the royal court, were also inspired by God and recorded in the *Puyas*. Some of the important festivals viz. Laiharaoba, Sanamahi Chenghongba, Imoinu Khuramba, Lamdai Thangja, etc. were drawn from the Holy texts. Puya worship is the mentality of the orthodox and elderly circles.

The Language and terms of the *Puyas* were used as mantras, incantations by the ritualistic experts in connection with community worship at the time of war, famine, visit of natural disasters, etc.

3. Puranic influence took a successful turn among the masses when we see the system of institutions of presiding deities of the house, system of worship of Gods of the state and many *Umanglai*/forest deities. The auspicious Puya materials and rules are all mentioned in the *Puyas*.

The message of Meitei *Puyas* is to maintain ecological balance and to maintain the balance of men and nature. We may turn back to the Puranic concepts of worshipping nature-mother earth, rivers, mountains and trees. The Meiteis propitiate the deities of rain, good harvest and trees long with honour. There are treatises connected with *utharol* (manner of plating trees), *uyanlon* (manner of cutting trees). Every place, mound, river and hills were regarded as the abodes of spirits. The Meiteis are loyal to these deities and swear in the name of them in spite of so many overt manifestations about the Meiteis. The correct ideas of Manipuri heroism was furnished by L. Ibungohal Singh in an interview with Gandhi at

Gauhati. It behoves the people and the ruler or people with authority to consult the holy texts with the help of the Pandit and Maibas.

History is replete with such actions of the victors in the different states. This was what happened in European history. The then Meiteis under their control could not raise any objection and were blind to the facts of British policy of good administration and stable Government. Even now regardless of the harm to the country and the people, the Manipuri forgot the British policy. The Manipuris had to go persecution at the hands of the despotic king, Pahheiba and the victorious British. But in their observation the position during Pamheiba's time was a little worse since he interfered in the personal belief of the people. The revivalist groups in the 20th century gave expression to their reactions in a numbers of books, festivals and state functions as was witnessed by us at present. In fact, in the absence of the script and a number of holy *Puyas*/texts the Meitei out-look and world view, philosophy, culture and civilisation could be handicapped like a ship without the radder and a group without any cultural and historical sense.

(ii) In speaking of Puya's influence on Manipuri life. I am to make a remark about the 70% contribution of *Puyas* (Meitei Holy texts written in Meitei scripts). The aptness of this observation is no where more conclusively evident than in noticing the following contribution of *Puyas* in Meitei social life.

1. Some of the modern educationists with high opinion of themselves treated the contents of old *Puyas* to be unscientific. They tauntingly remarked that a Meitei should not waste his time and energy on pursuing a subject which could interest only the rustic gentry, folk people and Maibas and Maibis (priest and priestpess of pre-vaishnavite faith of the Meitei). They could not understand what pleasure are found in the haunt of supposed treasures in browsing through those moth eaten *Puyas* written in controversial Meiteis scripts in worn out discoloured parchment paper/*Meitei che* or palm leaves or *Shadings* (skin of animal). They shut the door against the post and thereby forgetting the gems of the past.

4. As for religion and philosophy of the puranic influence we may think that Sidava Mapu/Guru Sidava and His consort Leimarel are described as the Supreme God and Goddess. Other deities of Guru's family with Sanamahi, Pakhangba and birth of many deities and their activities are narrated. The narration of may names of the Trinity and of other gods and goddess show their greatness. There are differences to their worship through Stotras, dance and music.

Types of meditation on the god without forms, god with Komai and mask (with form), worship with ends of life, *Kamas*, *artha* and social solidarity are the purpose of the Meitei *Puyas*.

5. Social organisation-The kings, the *phamdous*/nobles (title holders of the King's court), Piba (chief of clans), Chief of Yek Salais (clans), their duties, functions of women in different stages of Life, mode of worshipping their forefathers on auspicious timings, performance of rituals with

traditional dance, music, prayers, with items of polo, and martial arts, their effects are also stressed. The system of *Lalup* (40 days' compulsory attendance of a male in the king's court) for military works is detailed in some ways.

The *Puyas* culture is open to all sections of the people-the Meiteis, Lois/Scheduled caste groups and the *Bamons* (Brahmans coming from the rest of India). The principle of sacrifice for social solidarity, altruism at individual and social level, curbing of individual trouble, criticism of egoism, tolerance, etc. are stressed for serving the land from the increasing menace of invaders. The Gita principle of tolerance, brotherhood and service to mankind-so necessary for social stability of society are assimilated by the Manipuri Vaishanavas in their Manipuri version of the Gita. *Puyas* are handbooks of unfurling guidance for their daily life as well as devotional sadhana. The perfect sages who look all beings as equal are represented by the Maichous who helped the upward journey of fellow beings. The happy confluence of politics and religion, nationalism and spirituality as recorded in the sacred *Puyas*/texts has evoked the admiration and luminaries like Captain Dun, E.W., Dr. S.K. Chattarjee were impressed by it. Religion can never be divorced from practical life and social needs as we found in the Life of this community. Treaties on some social order are **Loyumba Shinglon, Mashin, Langlon, Charairongba Khunkum,** etc.

6. Impact on music, dance and fine Arts.

Puyas inspired Meitei Artists to try their hands in making of idols, sculpture and drawing of various kinds Paphal (diagrammatic representation of snake god Pakhangba), making of temples and shape of house. It was from the *Bhagavata purana* that the Manipuri Vaishnavas drew inspiration about Vaishanva Rasa dance, religious discourse and art of making aesthetic object whose influence still exists profoundly.

Against Darwinism, Agnosticism and skepticism they passed their doctrine that history is the play of a divine being.

7. Productions and Riddles enshrined in the *Puyas*.

Puyas under this category sought to give some predictions of the future of the land, people in the form of riddles. Mention can be made of *Shaingkak*, *Shingtharol*, *Matamgi Khonglei Takpa* (*Puyas* showing the wheel of time) Ngamdai Leitai *Puyas* Shingthaba, ***Chingu guru Puran, Keibarol, Panditsing Thuppa, Leihou Naophamlol, Indra Puran, Langon Langdai, Langpum, Langdai,*** etc. The language is in crytic saying which can be interpreted in different ways and the prophecy is subject to confirmation in modern context. Different interpretations for a happening by different scholars give some confusion and misunderstanding.

The old *Puyas* sayings had influenced every Meitei people. The saying 'Nongpok Thong hangle' (the eastern gate has been opened) in which they interpreted the western/European British rules in Manipur would be replaced by the Eastern rule in the Japanese through invasion of Manipur during World War II. The silent handing over change of administration to

the Maharaja by the British at midnight of August-14, 1947 (as a part of Indian Independence) has been written in the *Puyas* as the soundless firing of the gunshot or Britishers leaving at 3 clapping of palms. It was implied that the British would leave Manipur without any bloodshed or war. And that too at midnight when every body was resting and sleeping.

The ancient sayings which the inspired saints had left and which can't be ruled out by a living Meitei– Ngamu fish would remain as pictures on paper. Cotton would sink, stone would float which remain means that Ngamy fish is almost extinct, stone overflows roads of high cost; cottor in Manipur is not seen. Foul things will figure in the centre and the pure will be in the side meaning that the found things will hold sway in most case. 3 groups of Tengol army-The *Puyas* described the people of Kali age a full of lust, hunger and idle. The physical stature will greatly diminise and the maximum longevity will be too short. 3 groups of different armies will be engaged in continuous quarrels and killings. The underlying idea of the above *Puyas* (showing the wheel of time) shows the evil forces and the personification of strife. The combatants on the 3 sides may mean the insurgents, colonists and homeland seekers, etc. The present trouble may be figueratively spoken of which it is said that the people will have short longivity and their stature will be like the Pigmies. The swan song sung by Khonang Thaban about the position of Meitei script is visualising at the time of first burning of *Puyas*.

The saintly life of the pandits gave further weight to their saying and the wisdom affect, the culture and way of life. *Puyas* may be described aptly as the 'measuring rods of culture'.

The real test of the vitality of an institution or nation is its capacity to withstand a' crisis. Manipur was invaded by the Burmese, Tripuris and Chinese with materials for the destruction of this kingdom. The Manipuris were exemplars of the fight for their own good. The atmosphere in the beginning of the 19th century rang with distress among the people. They produced in the spirited people a restless desire to rescue the homeland from the clutches of the mighty Avas/Burmese.

The places of Umanglais in every villages and the capital of the Yek/Salai were centres of political and cultural activities and sources of inspiration. The worship of Apokpa by each Yek/Salai reflects the immense faith in their ancestor-gods to ensure economy, social stability, freedom from the visit of natural calamities and to deliver the people from bondage.

The clan deities of a group was respected even by another group. The ethnic identity and group loyalty are very well respected in the payment of their share at the time of worshipping the Apokpa with puja materials. The mode of worship of formalities under the *Maibas* are all born on their mind and soil.

This culture is the silver thread that runs unbroken, gleaming through the entire visits of Manipur's history and has sustained our nation in its long travel. The deities inspired and protected the clans all through their life. The

title of *Puyas* assumed by the Sagei, clans and the kingship assumed by the ruler were unique by the symbols of the kindly protection they afforded the subjects in time of war.

9. There were *Puyas* called **Sapharol** (science of controlling wild beasts of the jungle/hills, **Lanpharol** (secret of capturing enemy by the help of tantric practices) treatise on rewards, Exorcisms, *Maibarols* (lore of treatment), etc. widely cultured by the ancient Manipuris. They tamed wild elephants, killed wild beasts like bear, tigers, wild bullocks, *lamok*/wild pigs with the use of weapons and incantations. *Huirois* are well versed in mesmerising the tigers by their peculiar voices and lamentations. The warriors could dazzle the enemy's eyes by their lights and use of winds and hailstorms. They could cancel the rainbows and chop off the heads of the enemy by moving the first finger with the chanting of secret mantras. *Laihatlon* (exorcism) and medicinal lores. Being themselves dwellers of the hills and jungles and in a border near Mynmar, they are known to have widely cultured in magic charms, spells and defence of the country against enemy. By their keen observation they know that the tiger devours a person notorious for cruelty, theft, sexual crime and other vices. Tiger's teeth, skin etc. play a very significant role in early Meitei life. In the customary court, a Meitei accused or witness is asked to bite as tiger's teeth and swear that will give true statement. It spares if he speaks the truth of a person, when a tiger is killed, the state or the village observed rites in a ceremony of **Kayang thekpa** under the guidance of court pandits. Such a festival is no more observed at present among the Meiteis. The charms are full of Hindu/Sanskrit words. The ancient Meiteis had the credit of having on closing the function of sex organs, when the husband was away in a distant country and of making one leave a particular house or share by mantras while the compulsory forced labour system was very active under the king's rule. Also award presentation to civil and miltary experts was a custom that was prevalent in Manipur.

10. The Maichous/Pandits did much to keep the cultural life of the people by their works and actions. The art of copying of secred texts in Meitei made paper was carried on in the monastries at these periods when the art of printing was not yet known. Manipur's literary record of *Puyas* is worthy of praise. Truely Manipur is a small country with a rich culture. According to some Manipuri writers, the reign of Puranthaba (1247-1278) show the spectacle of growth and popularisation of many *Puyas*. He was the patron of Meitei *Puyas* rather than the destroyer of them. Kublaikhan planned to annex Manipur to the Chinese empire. But they were forced to abandon the plan on account of internal trouble. In 1250, a mighty Chinese force of Chinese Emperor was led by the king of Yunan and invaded Manipur Chinese were defeated by king Puranthaba. Bengal was by this time under the rule of Bala The Sena. His region is glorious in many ways. Many Puranas in Bengali made wonderful progress. The style of Puya writing was developed in Manipur under King Puranthaba.

III Concluding Reflection

The author concludes this paper with the following observations.

1. Hindu or Indian literature has received a great deal of attention from the Brahman pandits and scholars settled in Manipur as well as in Burma. In modern time Christian theological literature which is equally important since the British period in the beginning of the 19th century has been given attention by the tribals-groups of the Nagas and the Kukis. But literature and culture of the *Puyas*/Puranas of the Meiteis could not be compared with them in the same vein. Some modern scholars of Meiteis pleaded for the adoption of Roman script in place of Meitei script on grounds of typing and printing. The teaching of lores was handed down from teacher to people and practiced more or less by the people before the teachings got formulated in the manuals and handbooks of *Puyas* in Meitei script by the decree of kings. The adoption of Roman script is not convincing and not always relevant as the younger generations could not read and write in Meitei scripts.

The zealous guarding of this literature by the sectarians from the prying eyes of anti-Meitei groups and the apparent antipathy of the people toward it are responsible for this. We must note that the adoption of Bengali Script during the British Regime, changed the complexion of Manipurisisation and thought. It is pity that researchers is old Manipuri language and the University people have not equipped themselves with the reading of old *Puyas*. This observation was based on secondary sources without proper training in traditional lines.

2. Metei script has branched off into different schools in conformity with their stands and aims treated therein which are variant. Some advocates 27 alphabets which some stands for 35 letters. 35 letters provide the foundation of many *Puyas* of the court in an authoritative manner. Unfortunately in our own times the Government of Manipur give official approval to 27 letters and devalued the long tradition of 35 letters evolved during the later period. The exploration of the priceless cultural heritage of this land are too vast and can be done only through reading and writing of 27 and 35 letters. Script and palaeography of the leaves reflect age that we could fix stages of writing and thought of the King.

3. So far we have introduced the great Pandits and their works. The learned persons have unanimously declared the holy texts/sacred lore as the heritage. The persons trained in the *Puyas* happen to be the knowers of knowing the future, science of having communion with God and the science of restoring the dead to life (the case of king Khagemba). The lore of finer feelings and Bloodshed and tension in this age is attributed to the burning of the *Puyas*. We come across many characters and incidents that can offer and exercise influence.

4. The *Puyas* were written by human hands and in varied style and ways. The revelations are from the inspiration of God. Some of the *Puyas* present a wide contrast and diversity in the nature of subject and conditions,

cryptic expressions are employed by different writers. As several *Maichous* present subject under varied aspects and relations, there may appear to the prejudiced and critical observer, to be discrepancy where the thoughtful reader with clearer insight and training discerns the underlying harmony. No two *Puyas* are identified in the physical sense. Differences in passages and variations can be noticed through the contents are one.

One writer is impressed with one cult and one phase of the subject. Another presents what is forcibily impressed upon his own mind-a different aspect of the same but a perfect harmony through all. The truths revealed unity to form a perfect whole, adapted to meet the wants of men in all the circumstances and experiences of life. One way of consulting them is to integrate them with country's actual situation and timing.

To us the present and future generation, the chief lesson is to maintain the identity on the revelation of the holy texts and to defend our culture against alien influences and to establish the Meitei world view in the teeth of the modern position. Its effect is to undermine the negative values of other culture.

Notes and references

1. S. Gourahari, *Manipur and World War* II, 1983.
2. Vide my article 'Mainpuri Samajda Puyagi Ithil'(Puranic influence/Impact on Manipuri Society) Published in *Toknga* (a Manipuri Daily ed by Th. Phalendra Singh) dt. 11/2/94 and 18/2/94. The object of my paper is to present the continuity of this tradition and its impacts, as well as to bring out the wise sayings which have a bearing on coming events of this time.
3. Information collected from the noted pandits/authorities on *Puyas* such as Ng. Kulachandra Singh, late Th. Madhop and late Ch. Birahari Singh.

2

ADMINISTRATION IN ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL MANIPUR

The subject under discussion covers the periods from 33 A.D. onwards to 1891 A.D. that the paper cannot treat it in its entire extent. We also propose to limit/confine ourselves to a discussion of the following points in so far as our source material permitted.

Concept of Kingship

According to Meitei belief the King was the head of State, an incarnation of God, the fountain head of justice, etc. Kings were known by the appellation of Laining you/Meidingu Lairen/divine kings or manifestation of god Pakhangba or Vishnu, to save mankind and all living beings from anarchy and misery. Their person was associated with a list of do's and don'ts. It was a great sin to deceive or serve unclean foods on him. All appointments were made by him. A King was only a person holding an exalted position above all other persons. There was the check on him since he was the trustee of god. Instructions were given to the monarchs before and at the time of their enthronement which combined the injunctions of the Manipuri code, divination, oracles and of the Hindu Dandanitis. The frequent means to enforce a penalty and a decree was by way of **Ningthou Semba** (open revolt of the people under a prince or prominent leader). The code concerning the King and the queen say, "The monarch and the queen need not say two words, for it will be the source of trouble to the State." The King had been called the soul whereas the subjects had been called the body. The balance of power was maintained between the King and subject. The form of popular Government was monarchy which has to take into consideration the problems of maintaining peace defending the religious faith of the Meiteis and protecting the boundaries. The King himself could not enforce the machinery of the State. His highest consultants were known under the collective name of 9 *Khunphagthous*, 10 *Pongbataras* and 64 *Phamdous* (M.P. and M.L.A.) which had divine characters. He accepted their decision as always with him. He even used to ask their opinions even after he had made up his mind. The system known to them was indigenous to early Meiteis and not importations from Burma, Shans and Indian States. **Khunphangthous** represent 9 Umanglais/presiding deities of the wood, namely Wangkheirakpa for Mongbahanba, Khurairakapa for Laijing thouhanba, Khwairakpa for Naokon, Yaiskul Lakpa for Muba Ningthou, Nongthouba for Khamlangba, Pukhramba for Chalaba and Hiyangloi Hanjaba for Marjing, Shanglen Lakpa for Luwang Punshiba, Chong Khanba Hanjaba for Koubaren.

Ningthou Pongba Tara consisted of the following posts as Pukhamba, Nongthonba, Khwairakpa, Yaiskul Lakpa, Hiyangloi Hanjaba, Chongkhanaba Hanjaba, Imangloi Hanjaba, Iniloi Hanjaba, Phamthakcha and Naikhurakpa. According to another text called Kangla Houba these posts comprised 4 Leikairakpas (officers of the villages), 2 Shanglen Lakpas (officers of the big Departments), 2 Shangkhuba Lakpa (officers of the junior Departments), Pukhramba and Nongthouba under King Naophangba (426-518 A.D.) the codes of administration runs thus: "The land the sky will be bad if the learned Guru Pandits and the ..... who had the sound knowledge of the sky and the land and firm knowledge of the good and evil effects, did not reveal them. There must not be raining in the day time, in case of raining, we may call it Leikhong Nongkhong Kaiba (breaking of the natural law of the land and the sky), the solution to such natural violation lies in doing justice, and the disciplined. Laws must not be disobeyed. Cut the feet for offences involving cows, horses, cut the mouth for telling lies and finding fault with trifling matters. Extract the eye for those who eloped with another's wife and adulteration with the wives of the Kings. Uproot the offenders for king making or order the general massacre of the entire band of enemy.

The remnant of disease or debt must not be allowed. Anybody likely to wreck venagange must be exterminated in time at any cost. There can't be marriage within the same yek of the same clan from a common forefather, Pen of the same grand mother belonging to the same sagei.

The devotional services to the Umanglai (forest deity) must be held unconditionally. The person attending the shang/department need not exceed 100; the number of elephant need not exceed 20. The number of horses must not exceed 10 lakhs. The total of buffalo, cows and birds and animals will have no limit. For the land of Manipur the warriors in the battle field must be less than 30.

Loiyumba, the son of Irengba became King in 1074 and he had a training in the administration of his forefathers. He had the energy for organising a sound politico-social system. He gave the country one code/usage known as *Loyumba Sillen* for uniform administration and development. His code furnished the bulwork on which Manipur rested not only during his time but also during the reigns of his descendants. Manipur valley had been divided into 6 **Lups-Luplen, Kongcha Lup, Thoucha Lup, Khurai Lum, Chingcharup, and Khairup.**

King Loiyamba sat at Lupsang and assigned official duties to every surname/family for the solidarity of the state. He evolved a system under which he could tackle the state natured coloured by race, caste, creed and religion, "The worship of the deity, known as Mireima was entrusted to Huirem family, Khamlangba to Iror, Soraren to Sorensangbam, etc." As seen from the text, there were as many as 34/35 types of Meitei made clothes. The task of dyeing and preparing colours was entrusted to the care

of certain surnames. The rest will appear in connection with the section on crime and judicial procedure.

A note on Pana System

For administrative purposes, the Imphal valley was divided into a number of panas with well defined geographical limits. There were 4 important panas each under 8 important title holders. These panas were organised on the model of the Central Government, each chief (Lakpa) being assisted by a staff of titleholders. Khabam and Laipham panas were collectively known as Khunja or Poirei Khunphangthou wereas Ahallup and Naharup panas were known as Naija or Wangam Laiphangthou in a text called *Phamloh.*

The 32 posts mentioned already are duly known as Khullakpham. The deputies (Didangs) of them are understood as Luplakpham which numbered 32 also. The phamdous of the Chief Court were the Khullakphams. The 64 phamdous had to take important decisions of the state with the approval of the king. Under them are placed Pana lakpas (chief of each pana) and Leikai Lakpas (Chief of Leikai). The lowest unit was the Leikai/village and each village had its posts such as Hanjaba, Hidang, Keirup, Leirup etc. They were responsible to the state in all matters connected with the villages committed to their charge. They were invested with powers and duties according to a code known as *Loisang Mashil.* The head of the village/Leikai was officially known as Leikai Lakpa later known as Gopal Hanjaba and Gopal Hidang who decides both civil, criminal cases and also customary nature. Keirup, Leirup, etc. were meant for places which were distant and remote from the capital. The King appointed in each Loi/scheduled caste village the Hanjaba with almost co-equal authority of Leikai lakpa. These posts sought to play the role of the King/Governor in their respective villages. Their duty was to govern the religious and social life, to maintain peace and order, to try civil and criminal cases as to land and all clues of small controversies of their jurisdiction. The duty of a Leirup was to construct roads, to make drainage and river band and canals. The Keirup was composed of such strong men as were specially conscripted for hunting the tiger with their spears and scissors. The work of capturing war captives and collecting booty and realising tribute from a defaulting area were included in their duties. all these officers had to work under the direction of the panas (divisions).

Lallup (military) system

The steel frame of ancient system of Government was the Lallup system under the rulers of Manipur. By it they gave a milirary character to the administration. The division of pana into a number of Lallup was attributed to King Loiyamba in 1674 A.D. It was a kind of 10 days' voluntary service out of 40 days to the King by every male member who were between the age group of 17 and 60 years. Each pana sent a team of workers called Lallup. Each family was required to send a male member to

this team for the State. The son of the *piba* (chief of a clan) enjoyed this immunity from this liability of the Lallup on account of their position. So was the case of those who performed meritorious and brilliant services to the King in time of war. The King by his order in the copper plate or stone inscription made it a point to release them from the Lallup.

Those who worked in the Lallup were given nothing. It was a form of tax paid to the King in the form of labour. Like the Ahom method of Khel, the Meitei King harnessed every male member as a soldier and labourer. They had to work in turn and normally one-fourth of every economic class or scheduled caste group had to attend Loisang/department for performing their works. They were placed under an officer known as Lallupchingba (Lallup puller). Even the gods, the Brahmans, Muslims, Haris and tribals could not violate this system. An elaborate machinery was set up for recording the number of male member attending the Loisangs/departments under the Lallup and for filling up vacancies in case of absentees. The departments which controlled the machineries of the same was called Keirungba Yareksang or Khundil Shanglen. There were separate institutions and heads under whom the different groups had to attend and perform their services. They were groups which had to attend and perform their services. They were attached to several departments, i.e., boat making, rice supplying, cloth makers, milk suppliers, sword makers, and horse riders.

One male member of every family had to be absent from home 8 times in a year. After 10 days' work was done he was allowed to take rest for a month in his house. This was well expressed in a proverb : 10 days for State service and 1 month for home. When one returned home for his family after his state work he became a source of information in his area. some posts were reserved only the members of the royal family.

The code operates in case of absentees or defaulters on account of illness, emergency case or agricultural works during the seasons where a substitute was provided in a meeting under the presidenship of the Lallup puller. Anyone violating the rule without prior information or ground was heavily fined and beaten with a piece of bamboo stick. the money thus realised was deposited in the State Treasury. A substitute who took charge of an absentee in addition to his normal works was provided extra allowances. A kind of civic obligation rule known as Palemlange and Panthoulang Kaiba was developed by a system of paying money to a substitute by the person absent from duty on personal grounds. If one broke his lallup twice out of nine per year, he must pay the fine in the first cases, he must pay the double fine in the second case. If the same person filled up the vacancies twice he would be entitled to get the double of the fine in the second case.

If the numbers of the lallup could not complete a work within the stipulated time, it could utilise the services of the members in another department on a reciprocal basis or exchange a programme of give and take

known as Aka Akum Thingba. Later Texts like *Shanglon* and *Mashin* give certain duties and obligations of the families concerning the funeral procession and shraddha ceremonies of the king. It was the most obvious mark of the families of Meitei Society.

Besides the standing army, there was also a Kuki Regiment to look after the southern range of hills. It consisted of 1000 to 1200 men kept at the frontiers or posted on special occasions. Payment of salaries to them was a new feature. The army was organised on the system of western pattern.

Rules were made for the recruitment of army from the different communities, groups, maintenance and lines of promotion, special types of fire, stones and spears, daggers, swords, shields, darts, arrows and guns were manufactured for war. They had well defined techniques about diplomacy and fightings.

The law of conscription was evolved under which 5 sounds of royal drum (are sounded later 5 alarm guns) were fired for every able bodied man were required to be present in the court for emergency duty.

Their dispute was in charge of an adept known as Garod under the presidenship of Senapati. He was aided by 8 *lallup chingbas* of different regiments. In times of war the Senapati and the Ayapurel form the quorm and competent to pass the verdict. Black Pugree, Dhoti, etc. constituted the items of the uniform of Manipur army. Auxiliaries viz., transport, medical corps and store Departments are not separately organised. The army was expected to have all the knowledge's such as the duty to carry the wounded, to procure water for use, to carry arms and to use mantras for the injures. Horses are kept saddled for use of the King's servants police in connection with public announcements in different parts of the country. Maharajah Garibniwaz's reforms were marked by the augmentation of the courts with the sanction of posts and allotting night duties in times of emergency and direct control of the intelligent staff so that he could keep himself informed of the doings of the people and officers through an organised system of spies, *lalmis* and officers. Pana Hazari, *Nazari*, etc.

Maharaja Gambhir singh strengthened the army with the opening of a wing of state military force as an armed wing. There were 8 regular tulis (Regiments) of various companies which had artilary and infantry corps on modern lines. He was able to maintain a standing army of more then 5000 men. There were service tulis/bandiyars also. The military officers were graded into several ranks from Major Poila for a regular Tuli, Havildar Major and Kuts and one Subadar, Jamandar, Agari Holder, Haviladar and Amandar for a company. The general was the head of the army and generally he would be the brother or son in whom he had confidence. During the reign of Maharaja Chandrakirti, there was improvements in the organisation and training of the State milita on modern lines. He set-up a Poila company with himself as the Head/Major. Its members were of the

noble and middle class families. They were provided with arms. 4 tulis were added. Kotwal was in charge of administration.

The state milita consisted of army, cavalry navy and elephants. Chariot was held highly esteemed in war but continued to be used as a sign of asistrorary in social matters by order of the king. The royal horses were in charge of an officer called Sagolhanjaba, elephants were kept under Shamu hanjaba. In his time senior princes held the posts of Yubaraj, Senapati, Sagolhanjaba, Shamu Hanjaba, etc. They took interest in the manufacture of arambai, guns, daggers, etc.

Land Settlement and Revenue System

In theory all lands belonged to the King. An office was set up at the capital to deal with problems of settlement, revenue collection and connected affairs. The head of this department was known as Lourungpuren.

Tax was paid in the form of paddy, rice or corn and not in the form of cash. The officer who collected the revenue was known as Phourungba. No collection charge was made but the fine for late payment of tax was fixed according to the season whether spring or not and realised from the defaulters.

Revenue was collected from the following :—

1. Tax paid annually for land by the cultivators,
2. Lallup or tax paid in the form of labour,
3. Tributes realised from the hill villages of different Naga and Kuku tribes. Other sources of revenue were spoils of war, Levy of river, tank, lake, mines, property of dying men without any claim or heirs. Tax free lands were lands (1) based on the personal possession of the King, (2) based on the possession of the princes, princesses, (3) land assigned to Siphais, (4) assigned to a hero as gifts/rewards, (5) land assigned to the Brahmins for investing sacred thread and lands for the ruling deities. Practice of land grants for the service of the State was in use in ealry Manipur.

Lands Liable to tax fall into three kinds (1) Phamlou, (2) Sarkari and (3) Tounarou.

1. Phamlou was a kind of land granted to the titleholders/nobles either for this lifetime or with rights of hereditary succession. The nobles were the judges of the Cheirap (the Highest court of appeal) in the State. However it was subject to the payment of the stipulated tax of 1 potma/2 sangbais (as standard books for measuring paddy) per pari $2/^{1}/_{2}$ acreps per year.

2. Sarkari— These lands were the personal property of the King. The servants or the private persons cultivated them and paid the nominal revenue to the State.

3. Tounarou— Was categorised into two. (a) Land held and cultivated by a person from another on payment of the price. (b) Holding and securing

his share by a person after clearing the waste land and jungles. Permission of the King was necessary for this type. The State did not claim anything as its share in revenue for the first year. Neither the cultivator nor the over was liable to eviction by the King without paying some compensation to him. He had the right to sell it out or rent it. After a lapse of 3 years a tax of 6 chengkok of rice (3 member of rice) or money per pari per year was fixed. He was obliged to pay the same to the King's office at a fixed place within a stipulated time. In case of his default his right was forfeited. He could not sell it out to anybody for his due. This was a system of farming revenue to the interested cultivator for one year only. The maximum permissible limit was fixed at 2 paris of land. This he could do after setting with the *Loupannaba* (Officer in charge of land) of that circle. The latter made survey and assessment of the said area and kept a flag as mark of defining his boundary. This process of marking a place by erecting a post was called Urong Khinba. For lands above the limit the King's approval was necessary. As long as he pays the tax he is entitled to hold it for ever.

System of realising tax-The village headmen or duly authorised persons were to collect the paddy from their respective areas and to deposit them in the royal granary under his seal. In case of default by any person also, the harvested paddy could be credited to the granary without any fine. Immunity of tax or relief was arranged in times of accident or natural calamities.

The survey and assessing work was entrusted to an officer called Lourungba and some of his assistants. Regulation was made for this party. The allowance recorded by our text *Mashin* which provided that a Loukok Iba (recorder of Lands) was to be paid 100 sells 1/4 of a rupee for a pari of land (about 3 acres), 50 sells (1/8 of a rupee) for paper and writing records. He was to be paid by the cultivator at the rate of 500 sells (1/10 of a rupee) for a pari/ $2/^{1}/_{2}$ acres for fixing the boundary post.

The question as to the share of the King and Lourungba for allowing the process of cultivation was also fixed. The farmer must offer 60 phoubot (120 shangbais) to the King, The Lourungba was entitled to get l sel Lakha (about Rs.2.00/-only). In matters relating to disputes of land before the ripening of crops, the accused must be fined one *nai*/servant. For removing the demarcating post the accused must be fined a buffaloe. The Chief Revenue Officer was provided with 2 chengkots of paddy (one Maund of paddy), Pana Purel with 1 chengkot of paddy (half maund of paddy and Lourungba with 30 pots.

All relevant records are maintained and preserved by Lourungba. He prepared 10 books/records of settlement-4 for the lands of the sepoy villages, 4 pertaining to the panas/division of the valley, 1 separate book for the roal lands. The 10th book was the abstract of the 1st nine account books which indicated the names of owners,. name and number of villages, nature of the land and crops and Lands assigned to the army.

Important Kings such as Pakhangba, Khagemba reformed the scales and instruments of measuring of crops, grains, timing, weights and numbering by ensuring a uniform system. The coins were good in purity of seal, metals and artistic quality except in cases of times of war with Burma. Coins were issued by the rulers after assuming the royal title. They were found in many parts of Manipur. There need not be any scepticism about the identity of Manipuri Kings.

Police and military arrangement

Most of the courts already cited, had many followers called Loisangloi or Aka Macha to assist the officers. They corresponded to the police constables. The text (*Shanglon*) says that King Naothingkhong established keisumshang (jail) in 664 A.D. for prisoning the offenders. King Kyamba's greatness as an administrator is illustrated by his opening of 18 outposts which strengthens the regulation of import and exports in the bordering areas. Each outpost consisted of one officer and 10 sepoys whose duty was to maintain law and order and to collect intelligence about external aggression.

Grazing grounds were exempted from tax. Each village was in the know of its boundary. If any one encroached on the graing ground the villagers were duty-bound to report to the Lourungba from where the matter reached to the King.

If any cattle trespass was made from beyond the boundary of a village, they tried to solve it by peaceful persuations and methods in the first instance. It they failed to do so, they caught the cattle and handed over it to the Sallungba whose duty was to try the case. Out text/codes gave a list of his duties which included not merely the cases relating to the cattle of the valley but also of census of the cattle and veterinary works. He maintained a register of cattle and connected records.

Coinage Currency, Weights and Measures

Meitei kings standarised the coinage and issued a large number and variety of bronze, copper, silver and gold coins known as *Tangas* and Sels. The first letter/name of the king continued to be stamped on the coins of different types. On the coins the Kings described themselves as the agents of the deity (Pakhangba, Vishnu/Krisna/Govinda) This practice was followed by later Kings. The prayers made to the ruling deities was purely religious and conventional and did not affect their authority.

The administrative reforms were made appreciably by later Kings such as Khagemba, Garibniwaz, Bhagyachandra, etc. By the 17th and 18th centuries population increased. It consisted beside the people 7 yek salais, of a few Mayangs, Shans, Vishnupriyas, Muslims and the Brahmans. Most of the Principalities of the clans were amalgamated and absorbed in Meitei identity. Their territories were annexed to the Meiteis and directly administered by them. The King of Ningthouja/Meitei allowed the chiefs of such clans enjoyment of some titles in his court. Thus Angom Nigthou,

Khuman Nighthou, Luwang Ningthou (Kings of these clans) regularly attended in the King's court (Imperial and paid allegiance to them. Pukhramba and Nongthonba were the prime ministers in point of real authority in early administration. Later, the new system increased the power and influence of the chiefs of the absorbed clans han wielded great powers in executive and judiciary powers. They had matrimonial relations with the Meitei Kings and had personal consultations with them and played a leading role in the coronation of kings.

Judicial procedure, Crime and Punishment

Regarding the judicial procedure and system of judgement it was clear from the written texts that there were 4 courts, namely, (1) Cheirap (highest court), (2) Pacha for trying cases involving women and (3) Garod (Military Court) in respect of offences committed by the sepoys and (4) Maiba Sanglen (to try cases of religious and customary nature, civil and criminal cases involving questions as to customary marriage. Cheirap was the court of justice before whom cases were sent up after appeal. Appeal form the Cheirap were allowed to the king for bigger cases. For scheduled caste villages and for the hill villages, Chingsang Lakpa/Khullakpa (Chief or Hanjaba/Chief of the area) dealt with cases arising from commercial, land disputes, marriage and divorce. Mediation was arrived at in the village council consisting of the important men. It meant no cost for both parties. Sanction for enforcement was derived from fines, social ostracism and excommunication in gatherings.

In theory the king was the head of justice. But there were many judges who attended the court with strict decorum and observances. From *Langban* 1715 justice began to be impartial by the officials. The officials of the court were allotted seats in the court according to order of King Jai Singh. More posts came into vogue. It included mentioning all the deceased forefathers. Oath was made in the name of Sun, Govinda, taking bath and by biting gold. The chief judge of Cheirap court was the Angom Nigthou (King of Angom Clan) who used to preside over the proceeding by occupying the throne (centre) seat reserved for the chairman. To his right were seated 38 nobles beginning with Senapati, Guru Pandit, Khurai Lakpa, Pukharamba, Rajakhwa, etc. To his left were seated 30 nobles bearing such titles as Wangkheirakpa, Mantri, Nongthonba, Kotwan, etc. The occasion of the King's visit to the Cherirap court was to be marked by dignity. He was to be received by the judges by going outside the court. They should under no circumstances sit inside the Hall at the royal visit. The practice of sitting late and of making fire was prohibited as per the code since it meant the offering of the people and short reign of the king. They were to attend office at in the morning at 6 A.M. (Yuthak). There was no police investigation before the trial although we had *Dolaipabas*/Police. Upon getting the oral report from the concerned one, the court sent the police to arrest the accused. Sometimes it was announced in the market places. At his appearance before the court trial was announced in the market places. At

his appearance before the court trial was commenced by oral examination. The proceeding was divided into the following—

(1) Filing of complaint, (2) Proof, (3) Decision and (4) Punishment. The proceedings of the court were viva voce and without record. He swears in the name of Shrimad Bhagavat or Umanglai/forest deities. Oath swears in the name of tiger and thunder which gives much value. "I say truth or shall I die with my mother's flesh fried on pan or shall I be died with the eating of tiger or thunder. Our custom says that a man is on trial charged with stealing, witchcraft or theft has to resort to the following list of ordeals—

1. Ordeal by fire A piece of iron or tiki is heated which the accused is compelled to grasp. If he has committed the crime, he makes himself untrue. Then speaking untruth, covering himself with untruth, he takes hold of the heated iron; tiki, is burned and hence detected. But if he has not committed the crime, he covers himself with truth, and is not burned. Then he is released.

2. Drinking ordeal by the water-Drinking the water of the pieces of gold or silver or *phankhong*/seat of deities or conch. Water is poured into them and the swearer repeats his contention and drinks. It is done in the presence of the nobles. One is considered innocent if he had no harmful effect within the next some days.

3. Biting a spear or a dao-The person taking the oath bites the weapon after stating his version of the dispute.

4. Diving-We have tanks, river ghats in such place as Lilong, Nongkhrang (near the temple of Guru Aribam Mandap), Nongjeng in Kangla and one pool (near the present area of Imphal Police Headquarter). It was used both by the Meiteis and the Nagas and the Kukis. The Pandits call on the spirit of the water, Iraileima to do justice. On a signal being given by the officer the parties they dive for it after giving their versions or rather sit down under water. The first person who breaks the surface with any part of his person, be it his hair or clothes or part whenever proper witness was not available in the party, it was resorted to the body, losses. The true person who could remain longer under water are then dragged by all. Examples-If he sank he was declared innocent. In **Cheitharol Kumbaba** we find that during the reign of Chandrakirti (page 365), diving was resorted to when the King could not decide the case of a **piba**/chief of a clan. In 428 A.D. there was a dispute regarding the throne between Naophang Ahanba and Naophangba. The 2 brothers were made to dive into water in the presence of the gathering. The second son remained longer and was made the rightful heir to the throne.(**Chada Lainui** 1964, pp.5-6).

Ordeal by picking up two pieces of gold and silver

It is the method according to which the two parties were allowed to pick up the pieces of gold and silver which were thrown on the ground before the King or before the temple of Govindajee. One who picked up the piece of gold was declared to be innocent.

Trial by divine scissor-This form is considered the most important in Meitei belief. Two big stones of about 6 feet were found near the gate of Cheirap court in old Kangla capital. They are black in colour known as *Wayen kati* (judgement scissor). Their blades are open and cut as they came together. They are said to exist since the time of creation of the universe and continued up to the reign of Maharaja Chandrakirti. The gradual extension of Hindu law of justice had started since the time of King Jai Singh although much of the old law were not affected. The spirit of the modern English law was introduced in Manipur after the Anglo-Manipur war of 1891.

A case illustrating the cutting by the *Wayen Kati*/sacred stones in the shape of a scissor is an example of the way in which it disappeared due to fraud in Kali age. One person was charged with having stolen a piece of gold from an owner who lodged complaint to the king. They were produced before the King and his noble to touch the divine scissor. The accused managed to insert the piece of gold into a small pipe of *yeng dou* (a kind of reed)/in a bamboo stick and offered it to the stone. He silently uttered not to cut him as he had returned that he paid what he borrowed. The divine scissor did not cut him. At this the owner, on his turn, was angry and touched the scissor with a prayer to cut him. He was also not cut, his protest being innocent. Then the kati goes, the tradition told everything, that it lisappeared along with a piece of scared cloth. But the king who presided ›ver the proceeding was cut by the divine scissor for purpose of showing he people that the king would not be able to make any distinction in one's avour in the Iron age on account of fraud and play of evil forces. On urther repetition of such act there will be no meaning for divine ordeal. It nysteriously disappeared from the court since the Kings would not be able to ascertain the content of truth and the norms of conduct confirming to it.

Keinou Wayel

A peculiar Meitei Judicial Adjudication. A text called Loi Lingba puya gives information regarding adjudication. Whenever quarrels broke out between 2 or more individuals or groups, the matter was referred to the wise man of the clan who was to give the verdict with the help of customs and usages. Sometimes he gave oral discussion which became a model to the subsequent cases. It gained currency since the time of King Khagemba (1597-1652).

It means the mutual abandonment of a portion of the claim made by each of the parties to reach and ultimate compromise of the litigation. Normally the claims and counterclaims of the concerned parties are reduced to 50%. It is a via media in the administration of justice. Each of the parties must accept to reduce 50% of the original claims and counter claims as the case may be. It governs society till the Pre-British administration.

N.B.-No written procedure of judicial adjudication. Some of the methods and principle of Keinou Wayen remain in practice even in the

institutions of Local Self Government, especially in the administration of Village Panchayat in Manipur.

Ordeal by rice grains-By it 2 rice grain (one representing the complainant and the other defendant) were boiled in a pot till nature of food picked up from the pot proves the innocent persons. At times the parties were made to bite rice.

Ordeal by bouts-Like the Greeks they resolved the dispute by an appeal to bout. They used bow and arrow or spear in the bouts, the violation of which the breaker had to atone God's decree. **Chainarol** cites many causes of the dual. A dispute arose between Kangbisu and Chekha Moiremba of Khumal. Moiremba had his lot first and threw the spear and resulting a slightest scratch with blood on the body of Kangbisu but he falsely denied by saying that was due to the bite of leech while ploughting in the morning. On his turn Kangbisu threw his spear and killed Moiremba. It is said that Moriremba's wife brought the younger brother of Moiremba who challenged Kangbisu in a dual. He was killed as he violated God's decree.

The winner of the case was obliged to pay certain fees to the nobes/judges after the suits were decided in his favour as per the custom known as **Wakhei Sel.** Later the same was discussed by a resolution of Manipur State Darbar during the British regime. No court fee was levied in civil and criminal cases, but the guilty one had to pay the fine imposed and lose the disputed property.

The charge is made by British writers that the nobles had exploited the common people. They were known as Ningthou Ngamba Angamba (nobles who can check the king. The choice of a king depended on the decision of these nobles who were influenced more by consideration than by the interest of the State. They were composed of various groups, such as Khumals, Moirangs, Luwangs, etc. The influence of the Pandits was very great. The Kings consulted them not merely on points of religion but also on matter of law, war, defence, etc. We have evidence to show that the subjects had a right of redress in some cases. The king was stern towards offences committed by judges, officers and pandits. Judges, princes were suspended from their offices when reports for bribery against them reached the King. the King is authorised to disqualify a judge if he took bribe. They were ordered to be exiled in the Scheduled Caste villages for some period. Kings introduced the system of providing food, bodyguard, to the exiled nobles while in suspension. These principles have relevance to modern times. The code prescribes forfeiture of property and banishment of the judge for passing unfair punishment.

Punishment Punishment and its purpose were developed according to well-known retributive and expiatory theories. The common crimes calling for punishment were theft, impersonation, abortion, abduction, assault, treason, murder, rebellion, gambling, cow-killing, etc. Punishment varied from mere warnings/fine in the form of paddy, cattle to death penalty. Surest forms of punishment were death penalty, cutting of limbs (for theft),

extraction of eyes/teeth (for adultery), exposure to the sun, whipping, exile, ex-communication (a sort of exile to get rid of some people). In determining the crime the motive was taken into consideration. Logical methods are applied. Discrimination is made in imposing the punishment for different castes such as the princes, Brahmans, women or the common people. For women public disgrace was practised. The highest form was death sentence for theft, repeated conspiracy for twice or murder, etc. It could only be impressed with the confirmation of the king. If the culprit belonged to the royal family he was killed by Ngabong Khaoda Namba/putting into a gunny bag and thrown off into a river. For ordinary people it was done with cutting the victim's head off. Sometimes it had been done even with throwing one hung boulder at the waist or beating with a club in Sugnu. A custom of saving the victim by covering him with **Phanek**/lower garment of women prevailed in society.

A person guilty of a serious crime was sent in a boat to Sugnu village. His hands were to be bound by the paya by each of the **Hiden Ngakpas**. The wife of the chief of Sugnu village could save the victim in some cases by covering him with her phanek. The punishment meted out to such victim was imprisonment for life in Sugnu village as an exile.

In case of accidental death, there was provision for post-mortem examination and royal order for funeral rites and ceremonies.

Suicide was normally forbidden. It was allowed and respected if done for a genuine cause and at the option of those observing Sati or had lost all wordly desires and completed all duties.

Capital punishment was also carried out by having a person trampled under an elephant and devoured by tigers. Various types of instruments were kept for inflicting bodily punishments but not all of them were used. Crimes were reduced as the people lived in dread of the consequence of the punishment when the dead bodies were hung on the public places.

Attitude towards the hill tribes

The attitude of the Manipuri Kings towards the Hao was of integrity and friendship (Mangai Samnaba) accompanied by the use of force as and when circumstances warranted. Understanding and hill tours were conducted by them to prevent them from plunder and excursion in the plain. Relations with the Nagas or Kukis was conducted through the Lambus (interpreters). A separate institution called Haomacha Loisang was established and was run and managed in the royal court for purpose of looking into their welfare. This policy made the different hill tribes their eternal brothers and all wars and expeditions and resistance's secured the support of them. The Kings, generals and majors were in overall charge of all relations with the hill tribes in all sides. Even there were prime ministers, ayapurel major who dealt with the affairs of Burma Hill villages were conquered by force for not paying tributes to the King. Houses were burnt up. Later they were constructed afresh and food was provided for them in view of their habits and circumstances. Legends were invented to prove the

relation and common ancestry. They were given promotions by their gallantry, loyalty and efficiency.

This policy accounts for the sound and long administrative popularity of their rule in Manipur.

Conclusion— The power of the monarch has ceased to exist since the integration of Manipur with British India in 1949. They ruled over it till the said period. The titles/nouns of surnames are still used by the descendants. Land grants issued by the monarchs are still observed, temples constructed by them, tanks dug by them and the roads constructed by them and rivers drained by them are still used by us.

The forms of punishment are harsh and sanguine but if we took as the whole thing from the period, the people whom they rules, they are not wholly wrong.

Outsiders from the east and the west

Invaders, both the Burmese, Chinese and the Tripuries, Muslims and Cacharese had entered Manipur, and they were repulsed by the Kings. They never succeeded in conquering Manipur. They had attachment to Manipur and its soil, to every shrub and flower that grew here, which they regarded as too sacrosanct to be defiled by the touch of an alien. They were looked up with suspicion on account of their extra territorial loyalty. But the facilities were provided for the war captives, immigrants/settlers for their permanent settlement in Manipur by giving lands and Manipuri wives and priestly works. They were allowed to work in several avocations-brick making, silk rearing, cultivating, weaving, carpentry and soldier ship. Their skills were freely encouraged by Manipuri King. Some of them were merged in the local community and their descendants did not suffer any disability for their extra territorial descent. They gave one language, one system of administration, coinage, weights and measures, one script and compiling chronicles. The law was discriminatory in its treatment of different castes, it had evolved a highly civilised system of procedural law which can compare favourably with the Roman law.

Meitei system in some cases increased the influence of princes, chiefs of clans and very often predisposed them to rebellion. It was federal in structure. Sometimes they helped the invaders against the king.

Marriage of a Manipuri King with a tribal woman was permitted in Meitei society. Settlers from the hills came down to the plains and assumed the character of the Meiteis in the past.

The hill villages were the places of their asylum and guerrilla activity. The policy of keeping tribal wives, was pushed for political ends. They played host in times of crisis and had considerable influence on his attitude towards other subjects. They lived in the hilly defiles, they knew every tract in the region. They took to the hill areas from where they continued to fight.

Hill villages outside the bulk of the valley in the distant hills were not liable to lallup unless they were called in times of emergency. The chiefs of these villages were to attend the capital once in a year in Mera/October-November with the presents of small roots of ginger and kachu and took part in a state festival known as Mera Haojongba as gifts, records, etc. Each village loupanaba kept a corresponding record of his jurisdiction. Each of them was to send up to date report in his area about the lands reverted to the king, lands left by the owner, lands as entered as cultivation of fallow one.

Notes and References

1. In the main I refer to the well known Mitei texts namely Loyumba sillen loina silon compiled by order of king Joyamba. The text is edited with note by late Bhogeswar singh in 1970 and by Kh Chandrsthor singh in 1982.
2. N. Khelchandra singh's paper 'Anganba Matamgi Manipur (Lammit tumit, Samaj, Rajnitigi Phibam, Licngaklon) "Manipur of early age with reference to geographical position, society, Politics and administration" prented in the seminar of the 51st session of Manipur sahtya Parishad Imphal, 1986.
3. The legal aspects of the meities have been developed by group of Research Scholars for their PH.D, thesis in Political Science, Law and History. The author of this paper used to suggest points to them on these matters when they came to him for clarification.
4. I have written a series of articles in Manipuri of Meitei polity, customary laws and history of Manipuri journals viz.*Lanmai Thanbi* edited by Dr. S. *Raghumani Mangung* from 1984-89. The same are quoted and consulted by research students for their work.
5. Loyumba Sillen or Mashin codifir by king Loyumba stands out as an important books even to-day. Late I. Bhoghwar sing and kh, chandrasikhor sing edited the texts in the file of archeive language of which they were intrprturs. Their parapharse, and notes in modvan Manipuri are consutted by the people. See foot note.
6. Manipur prodned texts like Phamlon (treatise on posts and functions) Laishraphojn (Posts of deities is) and Shasgon (instititions). N. Khelchandda Sing edited Phomlon in 1986. The present author rollects the ms Sengha and decids on editing the some in a few days.
7. Much like cultured aspects of other people history goes that the meities managed Phanganai (Elavery system) under a sonlakps/chief till 1891. It was abolished during the British period. They point is not discussed here.

3

GLIMPSES INTO THE MATHEMATICS OF ANCIENT MANIPUR

On the strength of the available literary data we cannot trace a systematic development of Mathematics in Manipur. But their knowledge in numerology and astronomy is as old as their time of settlement in this valley (before the invasion of Alexander in India). We have not so far come across any separate treatise on pure Mathematics in as much as they were of astrology and astronomy and those too dealing only in planetary movement required to the extent of seeing the time of resing and setting of the sun, preparation of calendar for religious purposes. In later times learned people in this science were known as ganak (afterwards corrupted into Kanak). Early Meitei writers have also spoken highly of Numbers and Geometry.

System of Numeration— The MS *Khurailon* refers to the early times when new numerals from 1 to 10 and new words sprang up every time for a group of people in connection with their change of villages. The extra ordinary practice of abstaining from the use of language or number by a group who migrated from their former station on skirmishes was observed in antiquity. New works and numeration were minted by the elderly person of the group and used through a proclamation. Therefore we have so many numerals and terms corresponding to different groups.

We have to infer that different things such as fish (Nga), (prices of bamboo (chei), cane (lee) etc; were used to express or represent different numbers say no 5,100,1000 etc. so much for the earlier numerals. Even though such systems have been given up to-day for all purposes, still in rituals they are used. Afterwards coming near, we know that numerals up to ten are pronounced by the root letter:

Sanskrit	Meitei
1. Ekam	Ma
2. Dwi, Dwa	Ni
3. Tri	thum
4. Chatur	lee
5. Panch	Nga
6. Shad, shasta	Luk
7. Saptam	Taret
8. Asta	Nipan
9. Nava,	Mapal
10. Dasha	Tara

Enumeration was called— Singthaba (placing of dry sticks). In the early period the method of calculation with the help of sticks or particular things was in vogue.[1] The dry sticks came to be made in the king's court as

well in the individual house. The numbers i.e. 1 to 10 are stated to be— 1.-1, 2-11 3-111, 4-1111, 5-11111, 6-111111, 7-1111111, 8-11111111, 9-111111111, 10-. With just nine pieces of dried sticks and the vertical line one can write or calculate all numbers in a simple way. Such method is akin to that of calculation as discovered in the agorbark (aloe) or Egypt under Raeses-III. But the number 10 in Egyptian system is written as compared to Meitei writing. The different parts of Europe took note of the calculation by sticks as Yergubou or rod of nepier. Sometimes peices of fruits bricks, stones and wood were used in enumeration of money. In such a case (**Khullokpi sanaba game**) unit was based on 5 and not on 10 as we found in Greece and Egypt.

The Manipuri names are as follows— 10-Tara, 20-Kun, 30-Kunthra, 40-Niphu, 50-Yangkhei, 60-Humphu, 70-Humphutara, 80-Marphu 90-Marphutara, 100-Chhama. All units of different order upto 100000 have got independent names. The specific names of the units taken in order are as follows— 10-Tara, 100-Cha, 1000-Lishing, 10000-Lishingtra, 100000-Lakha. In **Leishemol Shei oiba** we get the system of counting up to the biggest unit AK or 1000000000 or with.

Of the numerals 1 to 10 those for 8 and 9 means two off and one off respectively the addition of what seems to be an otiose syllable (thoi) to the numerals say 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, is notable. In Meitei numerals 50, 60, 80 are formed by beating multiplying in score (Kun = to turn the corner), the multiplier being prefixed to the word as Niphu, Humphu, Mariphu (2 x 20, 3 x 20 and 4 x 20). For numbers 70, 90 (Humphu Tara and Mariphu Tara) we have to 10 (Tara) to 3 score and 4 score. It is realised that in pronouncing numbers upto 100, the multiplier proceeds and the Addendum follows (Humphutara). 50 is called Yangkhei which implies the Division (Yankhaiva) of 100 into. It may also suggest the addition (Yanshinba) of 10 to 40. It is surprising that in multiplying hundred for higher numbers the multiplier follows the word (Cha) e.g. 300 (chahum), 400 (chamari). Obviously these numerals upto this used by the small tribal groups and lois had no use for all learned purposes.

Measures of money : The twin Meitei words *sel thum* suggest that thum (salt) is invariably associated with money (sel). It also indicates that the salt was used for barter in this Kingdom and salaries, presentations etc; were disbursed in terms of local salt found in the State. Small cakes of round shape called thum from the local salt was prepared for the purpose of money transaction. Its standard size is of 3 finger tips). The manner of counting thum is 1,3,5,10 and 20 and so on. Bigger sized cakes were designated as thum tara (10) and *Kun*.

System of calculating the sel or cowrie is express the life bloods of scintific measurement wise made rulalivety important for to end salt in the recorded history of Manipur in sels, the only national coin in Manipur. The word (Sel) Manipuri cognate with the word (*Senbi*) from which the former

may be derived, makes one suspect a Burmese origin for the word which in Manipuri is reported to mean the Kabaws.

It also suggests the Kabows (Shans) might teach the art of miniting coin first to the Meiteis. No information regarding the first introduction is available. But in Khagemba's time round about 17th Century A.D. or perhaps earlier than that we have discovered sel or bell Metal coins with Sanskrit words.

In practice it is found to use sel makhai as the standard coin in the State though the use of Silver and Gold coins was in evidence. Makhai-sel means half a sel. The mode of counting is peculiar to them. Every 8 sels are called by the name for 100. 10 sels = 200, 24 sels = 300, 4 sels = are called (50) or Yankhai, 80 sels are called lising ama = 1000. These are 5 lising in a rupee. Nomenclature is in use from 1 to 24 sels. After 24 the fractions of each series of 8 sels are the same.

In the opinion of the British Officers, the normal rate of exchange was from 450 to 500 pieces of sel makhai for a British rupee. The standard value is 5/2 pieces. For measuring large quantities sel-lakha is also used. This method of counting money is used even to this day (50 years ago) by the women in the villages. Whether such a system is followed any where else in China (or any where) is not definetely realised. The British found it difficult to persuad the popu to over the modern estern before 1891.

Measures of weights: Weight is called khan onba or chang-tampba in Meitei language. In the earlier period prior to the 17th Century A.D. there was no good means of weighing gold, diamond and other precious stones. Tola system being freely adopted though san = 1/4 of a *tola*(mohor) is in use. A Manipuri Physician determine the number of variations of elements by calculation of combination. One sel mayek (standard Meitei coin) is equal to 6 combination, chamnings, 16 sels = 1 tola (12 grms) chaning 21=1 sal, 1 chaning = 1 grain of paddy. It was in some parts, however, that Haokhusi (balance) has been recognised very early as a means of weighting. This word is used in some MSS. It is difficult to say whether the quantity is always expressed in weight or volume. In measuring volumes (weights) of paddy, rice, potato and other kinds of grains in Manipur the following table is commonly used. 12 khulaps (muts or handful)=1 Utong(Bamboo made pipe) 13 or 16 Utongs = 1 Laitang (basket made of cane) 32 Utongs = 1 Likhai (basket made of cane) of about 24 seers 640r 63 Utongs = 1 Shangbai (basket made of cane of about one mond and 8 seers, 2 Shangbai = 1 Potma (Pot), 4-Shangbai = 1 ChangKot. Shangbai is a kind of standard big basket for measuring paddy in selling and buying and also at the time of making rents to be owner of the field by the tenant. It is of different sizes and numbers according to customary law. For the measurement of rice, One basket about 10 chitaks-Cheng Utong ama, 15 basket about 10 seers = 1 Chengmakhai, 30 baskets about 20 seers one chengkok = 30 Utongs. This table is still used by the people of Manipur for

rice. The king exercised control over the weight and measure on the evidence of literature and stories.

Land Measurment: 2 Laukhaya = 1 Sangam, 2 Sangams = 1 Lourak, 1 Louraks = 1 Pari (2 1/2 or 3 acres approximately). Possibly sangam refers to the area of land which can be cultivated by a pair of bullocks per day (2 mornings make one day for this purpose). Pari has been explained by scholars as the area whose yield of paddy is capable of feeding the prince, a pari (son) of the king. Pari was recognised as the standard Unit. Our conbention is that the measure of grain and lands were given as almas to the mon deities.

Linear measure : The units of length employed were khudon ani (width of two fingers kept in juxstaposition) Hui, a measure of 8 inches, Kap = 8 pan the distance between the tip of the thumb and the tip of fingers when they are spared out to the outmost extent, Khudup, a measure of 18 inches (the length from the heel to the end of the middle finger) and Sana Lamjei (length taken in such a way of measuring from the tip of the toe up to the tope of the fingers of the other side of the body while standing horizontally stretching up the fingers, i.e. if the measures commences from the tip of the toe of the left foot the top of finger will be of the right hand. Sometimes length of one arm plus width of four fingers in juxtaposition are expressed in Sana-Lamjei. Pakhangba (Ist Century A.D.) otherwise famous by his founding the Ningthouja dynasty and more particularly by his administrative reforms standarised the length in this way. After him, Khagemba (17 th Century A.D.) changed it by making Sana-Lamjoi as the length of two arms plus width of 4 fingers in juxtaposition. A model of accepted length kept in the royal chord. The units of Khudon, Khudup etc. are mainly used by the makers of cloth and tailors. Ropes or chord of different names were known to them. The unit of height employed was the Nahum which was about 90 inches. Possibly this measure represented the height or fathom of an average man in those days. It is taken in such away measuring from the tip of the toe up to the upper end or the ear of the opposite part or the other side of the body while standing horizontally (i.e. if the measure commences from the tip of the toe of left foot the top of ear will be of the right ear). 4 khudup make one *lam*.

Regarding the size of minimum visible, they advanced the conception of samna maphei (hair breadth), the dust, etc. they used to refer to the nos of handis in the body in their account of ennumerable numbers. For oil and chuse a kind of standard pitcher/4 khum = 1 chang/was in use. A pitcher called Nongsha was a measure for milk.

Then we may refer to details of geometry, Algebra, Reckoning of time, dimensions of the world, calculation of years for the chaks (Yugas), fractions and trigonometry, etc. A few problems of Geometry can be detected in a treatise called *Yumsharol* (manual of building of house). It abound, in the use of such words as Karan (Karna or the crossing point of two to diagonals of a house), Kochi (Kona or corner). The required house

had to be constructed with great care so as to conform to the rules of geometry of the house (called Sangai) for the King or God must be square (right angled) in the corners. The corners of a house or the ordinary people must be respectively less than the right angle in the north and south east direction and must be longer than the right angle in the north west and south respectively. The setting is absolutely local. They were thoughtful enough to construct in this way in order to prevent the passage of theifs and evil spirits. That is by the way to encourage the coming of servants and wealth. The problem of paring Hunba (raising of foundation, putting of pillars and making of rooms) lead us to the fascinating knowledge of rectangle, circle, diagonal of modern geometry, etc. The construction of houses with many rooms would have but impossible without a decent knowledge of the area that intelligent beings from outer space once landed on our planet and built them.

Atombapu Sharma holds that the method of house building and numerology are neither the original invention of the Meitis nor the copy from the neighbouring States like China, Burma, etc. They remined us of the Egyptian methods (vide the Robaologia the first book in Mathematics published in 1617 in Europe and Arithemetica calcularies or Arithmetica mecaatoria printed in 1662 in Germany). Such similarities between the Meiteis and Egyptians point to the same racial stock before the diversification of tribes in earlier periods. The Meities began to settle in Manipur with the Mathematical knowledge of a more advanced nature.

Reckoning of time

Because of reckoning has already been considered in another paper, we will not enlarge upon it here. The following measures were in common use among them— Wink (1 Mikup) = The old words mention very short periods of seconds, 8-wanglens or Pungs = 1 Yuthak, 8-Yuthaks = 1 day. This makes a wanglen or bung of time equal to 22 seonds, 3 hrs. one Yuthak. The astromomers were familiar with far detailed measures of time. The day and night are divided into (1) Yen-Khongba or Kwak-khongba (Cock-crow's first crying), (2) Numit thokpa (the break of day), (3) Numit yungba (Midday), (4) Numit Yungba Matung (after midday), (5) San-karakpa (the return of cows) (6) Sandhya Gouri or Yachangba (after sunset but before darkness has come over), (7) Numittaba (sunset) (8), Ahing (night) (Night) (9) Nongyai (Mid night) The day begins with dawn (ef. the Greecks and the Romans and the reckoning of month is a different conception which starts from the first panba (one day after the new moon). One month is complete when the moon is completely invisible once more.

One interesting feature is that the names of future days specially 7 (seven) days were used in the early days of social evolution when man's experience was confined to the creation of this land. The concept of waxing and waning moon served well for larger measurement.

The conceptions and difinitions, Yugas of the Hindus, trigonometry etc. can be put into the picture of Manipuri Mathematics by the 18th and 19th Centuries. Every Meitei astrologer is familiar with the sacred texts of the Hindus. The astrologer innovated procedures to represent letters with the help of figures in the tantric diagrams and horoscopes. Tantric figures were invented and inserted inside or outside the **Paphal**-a symbolic diagram of the incarnation of snake God called the Pakhangba. They based their astrology on Hindu works though local practices influenced them to a very large extent. The smallest unit of length of the time and length scale of the Hindus and tremendous power of abstraction of the micro and macro units served the practical purpose of Astrology and worship of Hindu Vaishnava deities in the state of Manipur.

The water clock system which originated in sumerion, Baby-lonia,s China and Bhagabata cult of India served to measure time here also. The western clock was introduced and served to measure time for Governmental purposes during the reign of Maharaja Narsingh of Manipur (1844-50) A.D.

Conclusion

1. In no other field of human enquiry are numbers more important and in no other context do professional and from various national and cultural backgrounds communicate them with respect and understanding. The Meiteies are known to have practised units and standards since several centuries at least by 1st century A.D. Some of the kings like Pakhangba, Khagemba etc; took interest in science, history and reviewed the systems prevalent in Manipur. The one selected to land measurement and Thaban (Lunar calendar) have survived to this day for ritual and Governmental purposes.

2. The inertia of people in retaining Hindu system and ideas among the revivalist section of the people is not a peculiarity of their culture. The conference is convened from time to time to co-ordinate, supervise and adopt the pre-Hindu/desanskrit systems for their mathematical purposes. However, Sanskrit or Hindu system of unit and measurement cannot be brushed aside.

3. The opinion of Atombapu Sharma that is a branch of Maljati the Meiteis imitated like the Egyptians in respect of numbering and measurement: is not known clearly because of the lack of historical evidences. But cultural scholars and artists have explained ancient Egyptian religious beliefs viz. cosmie egg, importance of the letter Ka, Earth having 4 (four) corners, union of earth with Sky, similarity of Head dresses, deities in the forms serpents as in index of affinity between Manipur and Pre-Eslamic Egypt. Such interpretations have not found general acceptance in the absence of adequate data. Both have development of their own-free from each other-a more case of accidental coincidence without any causal remark.

Notes and references

1. M. Jhulon Singh, **Manipur Sahitya Itihas** Imphal, 1947, pp 40; Atompapu Sharma, **Manipur Itihas** Imphal 1st edition, 1942, pp 228-230.
2. My observation Scholars like Late M. Chandra Singh Head Pandit of Royal palace and Late Th. Suro Singh Chandra Siddhanta gave important points to me when I discussed the matter with them.
3. Late W. Yumjao Singh, **Notes on Archaeological studies in Manipur,** Imphal 1939, section on coins, **Monograph on Archaic Manipuri script,** 1985 pp
4. **Dictionaries in English, Bengali and Manipuri,** Delhi-110035 pp 336-339
5. Atombapu Sharma, op. cit, pp 227-228.
6. Vide my paper 'Manipuri System of Astrology and Astronomy' presented in the 30th session of A.I.O.C., November, 1980 and the same appeared in the Proceedings of selected papers published By Bori, Poona.

4

NEW ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES IN MANIPUR

Manipur is an ancient country situated on the north east corner of India. It is studded with historical remnants that tell us of the change of cultures, material advancements humming with different activities of the people in different periods. They tell us so much about the life of the ancient people, that they can keep busy a good number of researchers for decades, reconstructing the history of this land. However much light is yet to be shed upon the life of the Palaeolithic people through archaeological finds. The aim of this paper is to deal with details regarding some aspects such as (i) A little history, (ii) Problems of excavation under the Maharajas, (iii) Light thrown by archaeological finds on the history and culture of this land and (iv) Suggestions for improvement in this field.

(i) A little tradition and history

The pandit loisang (Royal archives and institution for anti-quities), has been the nucleus not only of religion and philosophy of the Meithei people but of the history and archaeology of the State of Manipur itself. The modern age of archaeological studies on western lines is said to have started with Late W. Yumjao Singh, Gaveshana Siramani, who was a Superintendent of Government Press, Imphal and retired his life as the Education member of Manipur State Darbar during 1935-44. The department was discontinued after World War-II and unfortunately the Govt. for reasons unknown did not revive it and we have to wait the year 1969 when the Manipur State Museum was established under the initiative of the Education Directorate of the State. Conditions were made favourable for this field by opening an office of the Registering Officer for antiquities cum the Superintendent of archaeology in 1976 under the Secretariat Education Department of the Government of Manipur. Again a new directorate for social Welfare, Arts and Culture was open in 1980 with duties to promote the restoration and conservation of ancient materials and look into the above departments. Private Museums of Mutua Bahadur (1979) and M. Gourachandra of Kakching (1980) yield a good harvest of coins, plates, sculptures and manuscripts.

(ii) Problems of excavation

The kingdom of Manipur is potentially rich in archaeological materials although it is not much known to the outside world. The reason for its drawback can be traced to the following factors—

1. Most of her history is constructed through old books which consist of fables, folk beliefs, historic annals of allegory and rituals from which it is

difficult to separate the historical truth. There was a belief among the Meiteis of Manipur that the unearthing of underground antiquarian things would shorten the reign of the ruler and the life of the excavator. The Maharajas following the advice of the Pandit Loisang (the office which deals professionally with the place of ruling deities) were not willing to grant prermission to anybody. Late W. Yumjao Singh, a pioneer archaeologist of Manipur attempted twice to take permission from the Maharaja through the persuation of the political Agent and President of Manipur State Darbar in the beginning of the twenties. On similar grounds nobody can dare to examine gold and other particles which were preserved in the groves of important **Umanglais** such as Wangbarel (deity of river) and Marijing (deity of polo), etc. The shrines or groves are surrounded by an atmosphere of terror-stricken veneration and religious fear in the common belief. The excavation would disturb the concerned deity to which the people attach so much importance.

But the secret parties or thieves have been more daring and less superstitious than the official scholars and the sane persons. Instances are on the record where thieves went to the sacred groves where the scholars dared not to go with great caution they dig holes to haunt up the treasures. They were not guided by any desire for knowledge, but by the taste for wealth.

2. Manipur has been styled as a monarchial state without much of remnants of palaces and rich monuments. The existing temples, buildings and palaces do not deserve the name of historical relics. There have been powerful kings such as Khagemba, Garibniwaz, Jai Singh, Chandrakirti, etc. but no king was too rich to leave behind him monuments, buildings and treasures which he could be remembered. The kings lived simple lives wandering from one holy place to another in later lives. A dead king was provided with the royal dress, furniture and other passessions which he would need in the next life as a person of high status. But they were burnt up along with the body at the time of cremation.

Accroding to Manipuri practice private buildings must not be grandeur or excellent. The kings destroyed by letting the elephants fall upon the secular monuments. The above features are the important Socioeconomic structures of Manipuri Society through the ages.

3. The people concealed their manuscripts and valuable treasures in the jungle and elsewhere in order to save them from the powerful kings and their guards who were ready to destroy the relics of old faith. This is the case in Manipur after the great religious persecution of Manipur since the 18th Century A.D. King Pamheiba alias Garibaniwaz under the influence of a fanatic missionary burnt down much of the scriptures and art as the work of the devil. The panic stricken people who wanted to preserve their treasures invented the rumour saying that the prince would die if it is opened. It is held that the purpose of excavation will be jeopardised if the

owner did not wish someone to get his burials. His blessing at the time of concealing them is held as spiritually binding upon the diggers.

4. The series of wars with Burma and the British (1891) turned Manipur into a heap of ruins in connection with the manuscripts and relics. The soil is not dry for preservation of material to trace the development of her early culture and civilisation. Add to these, we see the obstacles caused by pythons in the swampy areas, rain, bad communications in the hill areas and belief in evil spirits that can appear and reapperar according to their will. Again objection to digging is come from the conservation minded and ignorant people, the tribals who did not like their fields being destroyed and turned upside down. There was a belief among the people of hills and plains that the wealth that lie buried in the ground is an ill-gotten money. The person who got them will be troubled by the presiding deity of bad luck[5]. The Naga and Kuki tribes discouraged the digging of tombs on religious grounds. They also call this a stange occupation for the people.

5. There was no organised attempt to carry on systematic exploration and excavation of places of historical and mythological significance. Till the opening of Archaeological Department in Manipur Late W. Yumjao Singh carried on privately in this direction. Since 1933-34 the state has given a small sum annually to assist in his research. The department of archaeology was discontinued after world war-II as Manipur happens to be field of war. It is the burial of explosive bombs in different places of Manipur by the Japanese that makes the problem of excavation difficult. The killing of some persons by bomb explosions create a lot of headache for anybody in excavation.

The state departments of Museum (1969), Archaeology (1975), teaching department of Anthropology in D.M. College and Manipur unriversity and the voluntary association were still in infant stages and it will be too early to give a review of works done by them in this field.

Finding the archaeological site-How does the Meitheis know where to conduct the excavation of places that yield records. Here are some lines which have to be followed. We have innumerable mss which speak of hints about actual spots and enbit depths in thich jewels, stones and mss were to be found out. The ms **Chinglol Laihui** gives a vivid description of stone temples, iron gates, bolts and sacred objects connected with important deities of the Meitheis. Another book called **Nungnol Thambal** shed light on the different kinds of precious stones having supernatural powers and also the places where they are kept hoarded. **Langol Chingoirol** says that the Manipuri kings and queens of ancient times used to build their granaries underground while they used to store their wealth under it. We believe that the huge granaries were replenished by a system of state tributary and they fulfilled in the economy the function of the present treasury of the state. Important keis/granaries were Sekta, Changongkei, Mongsangkei, Koirangkei Kuibug. Some of the mss mention discription of sites which will yield buried coins, bones, and structured remains. The surface

indication according to them reveal the difference in the colour of crops, grass and plants. They can be understood by seeing dry grass and plants.

The service of a pandit or a specialist in ancient lore is requisitioned in digging a place where something lies beneath the surface. His method consists in throwing the seeds of **mudki** (parched rice) after worshipping the presiding deity of the day. If a large number of seeds get scattered in an area for one or two days, the place is deemed fit for excavation. He may use a lighted candle made of wax with some charms[7]. The melting sound thus produced has to be clearly seen. He profeassed to be able to trace the underground remains from the direction of the sound with the help of **Lang Ahingba** (thread not soaked in starch) and oil placed over the palm of the owner of the place. Proving is being introduced by the Japanese team when they visited Manipur in 1974-75. Their special instrument brings out good results in finding the bones of the Japanese Soldiers who were killed in different areas of Manipur during world war-II.

The consultation old mss and the pandits being over, digging can take place at such places as Leipung (mound), Surung (tunnel), Khong (mines), Keis/granaris, cave site and ancient capitals of loi tribes which yield antiquities from its civilisation. These terms are mentioned frequently in the old texts, without understanding of which one cannot know the archaeology of Manipur. Some clarification is made here although it is not without its pitfalls.

Leibung (mound). During the course of development, the Meithei pecple built mounds, some of which was for fixing boundaries, some for keeping promise, some fore remembering an important event and many for keeping the idols of their three immediate ancestors (*apokpas*). There are about 1000 mo''nds in the valley, the most important of which are among pung (mound of cheap price), Sondong pung (mound of unlimited spring), Lalampung (mound of wealth, food and cloth), Langdai pung (mound of creating friendship) and Wangthenbi pung (mound of getting one's promotion) in differnt parts of the valley/sana Pungs namely (of gold), Numit pung (of sun), sumnapung (of black magic) are added in Kangla. Pakhangba the divine ancestor is fabled to introduce ploughing and sowing the seeds for the first time at the chaksou pung (mound of rice) and Yusou pung(mound of wine) at Kangla. It became necessary for the pandits to dig these mounds and perform the due rites which we find in vogue in their mind to get the desired result and objects.

Surungs are underground caves which are considered holy by the Meitheis and the tribals. According to their belief, they think that Pakhangba, the divine king had the miraculous power to being able to sink into the ground and appear at some spot many miles away; these places are known as surungs which have been in existence since the time of snake god Pakhangba. Importnat among the surungs of Imphal valley are Kangla, Khalong in the Nongmaiching Hill, Khoibu, Moirang Raja's throne room and Khumal Raja's throne room at Mayang Imphal, etc. whom the Meitheis

think that the underground passages lead from one place to another place. Detailed information on the nature of ancient Meithei belief before the coming of Hinduism comes from the finds of underground caves. Besides discovering valuable stones, one used to discover at **Nongmaijing Khalong** thousands of **Khabeis** (ladles of iron) laid by the kings of Manipur in commemoration of their reigns (Proclaiming themselves as divine kings Khangkhui cave and tharon cave in the hills may be as old as the early stone age. For north eastern India owed its pre-eminence to the Khangkhui cave. Besides sheltering many people it was used as a fort by Khagemba Maharaja in his war with the Chinese. Names of 10 capitals have been securely established as a result of detailed study of the records. Imphal was divided into 7 or 10 principalities, independent of one another under a chief in a capital of each. By degrees the Ningthouja dynasty annexed the territories of other clans. But the ruins of their capitals such as Mayang Imphal (capital of the Khumals), Moirang (capital of Moirang), Loijing (capital of the Mangangs), Luwangsangbam (capital of the Luwangs), etc. have been visible to us. The four divisions of Imphal valley had their own **mels** (throne rooms of Pukhangba) for purpose of rites. It is to be noted that Kangla, the ancient capital of the Ninghthouja dynasty (now in Assam Rifles area) with its ruins, mythology and mounments became konwn to us. Our ancient lore and puranas have revealed that Kangla was the capital of Chakpa tribes and Khaba tribes before the emergence of Ningthouja power in the first century A.D. Pre-hristian Kangla is as dead as can be with 70% of its of ruins still underground and unexcavated; what ruins they are. It will not be farfetched that objects found in the lost sites of Kngla and other tribes will tell us about the culture of Manipur before the christain era. Similarly the prospective sites for bishnupuriyas or Khalichas (the Chinies name for the people of a great lake) are Vishnupur and Manipur Imphal.

For some years the important pools, temples and places have remained unknown to the people though remains of human settlements have been found at them. Ruins of Ningthi Khumanching may be the one built by the famous physician Kabui Salang Maiba (physician of Kabui Naga tribe) in Epics of Moirang. The tank of Angom Nongban was identified with certainty at the one near the south East of the temple of Moirang Thangjing. The pool with its medicinal properties which is mentioned in Khuman lore, still exists and is at present covered by the Muslim inhabitants in Mayang Imphal. The uputabi fountain where the box (said to contain some of the valuable things of the king's court in the 19th century) and **Shaheb Ingkhol** (garden of company officer) near Sangaithal have been found by W. Yumjao Singh. But he could not proceed any further in taking it up".

Strides on archaeological sites

Accidental digging may lead us to the sites as with new objects of hand made potteries of ceramic materials at Phunal Maring, metal tools of digging near Khurai Lamlong (4 kilometres to the north of Imphal) and a discovery of gold cup in Pidonahill by the boys under Lamlai Police station.

Also found a golden peacock of small size about 51.5 grames/515.00 mohars associated with iron implements and bronze vessels in Kangla (Assam Rifles compound at present). We are able to find a copper plate issued by Maharaja Chandrakirti Singh (2nd time 1850-1886 A.D.) at a mound in Vishnupur hill (18 miles to the south-west of Imphal). Relics of Buddhism were brought to official notice by accident when Lamboi hill in Chingmeirong was broken by a contractor in connection with the extension of Sindam Singsang High School. While digging the earth most of the contractors found stone and Iron implements fortuitously belonging to a type hitherto unique and whose period requires a deep study. The people of Khongjom found parts of rifles and arms and *Chhapa* (made of brass) or bell-metal with the words of Radha Krishna when they did digging of the area of Khongjom (the histories battlefield between the British and the Metes in 1891) for school development in 1970. Systematic excavation may bring to light some information regarding the exact site of the battle. On May 31, 1981 at Kakching, the State Archaelogy Department has excavated a burial site consisting of heads, barbed arrow head, spearhead of iron, earthenwares, pots, etc.

Finds of W. Yumjao Singh relating to historic times. W. Yumjao Singh began excavating sites like Sangai thel, Kameng, Uputabi etc. Besides exploration he emphasised the importance of epigraphy such as coins and inscriptions also. He collected a number. of stone inscriptions some being found in the compound of Khonthoujam Lairema (diety), Ngaprum Chingjil (in the Cachar Manipur road), Kharampelel and also in the hills of the Imphal valley. From Phayeng village he purchased a series of 7 sheets of copper plates together with fragements of others which when he decifhered them was throwing light on the religious condition of Manipur in the 8the Century A.D.

He made a collection of coins, some pieces of bell metal called sels some of which has been identified as the one issued by King Parmatta Singh who reigned in Assam from 1744 to 1751 A.D. A collection of mss written in archaic Manipuri Language and script such as **Cheitharol Kumba, Ningthourol Sinkak, Poireiton Khuthokoa, Panthoibi Khonggun;** etc have been made. Old and moth eaten Shan mss have been produced from the descendents of the Shan settlers of Manipur in 1932. They have not been so far deciphered. The matter was referred to the authorities in Rangoon by the Political Agent for opinion.

Among his collection mention may be made of **Dharani Samhita (Sanskrit), Garibiniwaz Charit (Bengali), Laksmi Charit, Ramayana, Chandi, Mahabharata (all in Bengali)** and Assmese version of **Shri Mad Bhagavat Gita** written on the barch of the birch tree in 1803 A.D.

Finds of importance from his Sangaithel excavation from 1929 to 38 relate to remains of pottery, stone utensils, apostherd, actual plinth of the old place building. In 1934-35 excavations are being made by him at Kameng (north western portion of the valley about 9 miles from Imphal

both by the Kangchupkhul Road or the Dimapur Road and is on either banks of the Luwangli river) where the weight of a dragnet, 3 different varieties of weights, and some pottery of the 17th century have been found.

During the same year his finds include some pottery in fragments of terracotta plates, cups with a glazed coating from Kangla (cantonment area) and old palace site at Awang potsangbam. An image of Buddha in stone without the head was also found in the Ningthem Pukhuri (old tank). A musical instrument (Shamenda in Manipuri/Sharinda in Bengali) was acquired by him. It is said to have been made by Raja Madhuchandra (son of Jaisinha) in the 18th century who played it when in captivity as a hostage in his boyhood days at the court of Ava.

His collection includes antiquarian arms, thirteen cannons were recovered from the Imphal river near the old palace in the present Assam Rifles area. He discovered I spearhead of the Khangningta kind (a kind of spear), a Manipuri sword of the time king Jaisinha, an arrow from the Sangaithen/Jainagar excavation and a spear head of the cavalry variety from Kameng excavation.

But unfortunately no traces of whereabout of his copper plate and various collections are known to us. The report giving the details of his finds and excavations was being printed and published in 1935-36 by the State Library, Imphal, Manipur. Our knowledge is confined to this report. After him Manipuri archaeology fell on evil days. (till 1978)

Pre-historic remains in caves and rock-shelters

According to Manipuri belief, pre-history lasted until an extremely late period that is 33 A.D. the year of king Pakhangba's ascession to the throne. Mythological age extended until the reign of the first ten mythological kings of Manipur (33 A.D.-658 A.D.). Sedimentary and metamorphic rocks in and around the valley and the fossil of a cuttle fish found on a hill on the Imphal-Tamenglong Road brought to light evidence that the valley and some of the hills were under the sea. Finds of O. Kumar Singh are the interesting materials in terms of the light they throw on the background of paleolithic and neolithic age. The palaeolithic tools recovered from two of the prehistoric caves in 1969 near Khangkhrui Khullen village (11 kms. south east of Khurel town) were (i) an uniqui type of chopping tool, (ii) a chopper of south east Asian type, (iii) Hand axe, (iv) Spear heads scrapers of different types (v) Points (vi) Blades, (viii) Burins, (ix) Borers and (x) Flakes. Most of them are made of lime-stone while some are of stone and sandstone. These caves yielded animal bones, teeth and pieces of charocoal along with the advanced tools. Five pebble tools along with one flake tool have been discovered by Prof. O.Kumar Singh from the cave site at Tharon (about 2 miles towards the north of a Kabui village) in the midst of thickly forested Jeyanglong hillock.

The neolithic implements whose discovery was noted above (at the start) included (i) Quadrangula axe, (ii) Quadrangular adzes, (iii) Adzes, (iv) Tiny celts, (v) Chisels, (vi) Rounded butt axe, (vii) celts with pointed

butt, (viii) Axes with brood cutting edges, (ix) Souldered celts, (x) celts having traingular, trapezoidal, elongated trapezoidal, and rectangular shapes. Most of them have a rectangular cross section and vary in size, from 14.9 cm. to 4.2 cm. in length, 9.3 cm to 17 cm. in breadth and 3.2 cm. to 0.6 cm. in thickness. The archaeological collection of Manipur State Museum since 1969 consists of stones statues 60 old coins, stone tools = such as a neolithic celt axe type and a hand, flake and core from Kangpat area of Ukhrul, East District potteries from Keibung and Sekta Kei. Megaliths at Mao urea of North District and stone inscription from the compound of Governor, surrounding of Imphal etc.

Recent Archaeological Advances

During these three or four decades our knowledge of ancient Manipur has been further increased by new finds and fresh interpretations of archaelogists, indologists and critical historians. Neolithic culture is well established through the finds of Phunan, Napachik, Wangoi, Laimanai and Nongpok keithel Manbi. A great deal of polished stone tools and ground have been discovered by the team of State Archaeology Department. Issues such as early humnan settlement in these areas before 1450 B.C. are being examined by carbon gating method. They yield a perspective for the emergence of stone age cultures in close connection with those of South East Asia and extra-Indian affiliation.

A number of finds a few among them being urn burials, pots, Iron objects in the jars perhaps used by the peoples who lived in the first century have come to light by the excavation of Sekta in 1991 by the officals of State Archaeology Department in conjuction with the Achaeological survey of India, excavation of historical site of Kanchipur in 1990, recovery of a wooden coffin along with funeral goods from Mairembam Leikai, Moriang in 1992, cave/historical site at Awaching, Keirao in July, 1993, Megalithic Remains at Willong Village in December, 1992, exploration at Moirangpural, 1992, Salungpham (Thoubal), 1992, Survey of Kangla Fort and excavation of Chakpikarong in Chandel District in 1992 by the History Department of Manipur University. The relation of puya tradition and Archaeology recieived inspiration and experience of inscorehers from the local finding of different wooden boats, copper plate insription coins, unmitted pitcher, car, etc. from Hoolakble in Kumbi stupur on Vishnpur district in 1988. Hiyong tumbe and Nooda-Khong, Kokchemba mine in Hodtaklape an fomar abode of god which pursurned be riliy charactristie of Manipur during the last part of king Khagemba.

Historians and Archaeologists are concerned, more than ever with the collection of coins-about 1769 said to be collected from the bed of Imphal River, at Moiranghom, Singjamei, Kshetiri Leikai, Ningom Thongjao Lairembi Compound, Sangai yumpham (at Canchipur), sekta and Wangoo Laipham. Some more are from Khangabok and Sugnu. Some of them are modern, some belong to British Indias before and after world War-II and more important ones are bell metal coins of ancient Manipur. Coins and

currency Notes so far collected by the author and his wife from such countries as former U.S.S.R., Syria, Egypt, Guinea, Jordan, Myanmar, Britain, Holland, Germany, France, Polland, Afganisthan, Algeria, Finland, Belgium, Japan and Thailand have become segnificant in the context of broader historical relations and cultural exchanges.

Another note worthy feature is the discovery of new inscriptions in Ningel, Chibu, Kumbi, Vishnupur Keithel near the bank of the Ningthem Pukhri, Moirang Inscription, Nungba Khullen (in Kabui Language), Wabagai, Kakching Khunou, etc. by the members of the Archaeology, Museum, Department, Govt. of Manipur with the active support of some members of private Museum, Buddhist elements, as seen in these collections had attained their resourceful places on the discovery of Buddhist icons (of Bronze) white marble, stone and wood) in Bhumi parsa poses, Anjali poses from Kakching, Tengnoupal District and Imphal Valley. The relic casket amidst the burial pots discovered at Sekta Thumkhong in 1989 made us realise embodied advances in the Buddhist influences in valley areas of Manipur. Since the 15th Century it is said that some Kabaw/Shan, Napits/Barbors following Buddhism settled in the northern side of Imphal valley by order of the king. These Buddhists did the work of decorating and making up the hair of the King and Queen. A site in the north of Imphal konwn as Napit Palli is still to be seen. Basing on these evidences study of place name and scriptures, researches have set aside T.C. Hodson's assertion that lofty ideals of Buddhism was not noticed by the Manipuri animists. The author integrated Buddhist and Hindu elements in Manipuri culture, thought and way of life for which all subsequent, scholars followed and shared the concerned models in varying degrees in their research papers and books.

Archaeology has contributed the following to our knowledge of Manipuri's history and culture in the following way.

1. It gives us the life and history of other nations with which the people of Manipuri had contacts. They are the shans/pongs (a brance of the Tai group of China, Myanmar etc.), the Avas, (the Burmese/Myanmaries), the Ahoms, the Takhels/The Tripuries, the Cacharies and the English. Manipur's history is seen in its historical setting on account of the interaction of the Meitei kingdom with them. The history dating from prechristion infhun of the powerful Pong/shan civilisation in Manipur. Pong Ingkol (Hometead garden of the Pongs), Pong Lambi (route to the Pong country) and Hawai Pong, Bursdon (geava) and Pidona hill Kabane lei Koi took on the sok as venue for the remnents of pong contact. The pongs made the places a habiable residence and farmily. When in 1983 young boy accidentally picked up a gold cap in Residon hill (in order to see a dead bird) it had been hold by the elderly people they the till won sitted by a Pong Previous and the burals of their possesion remaing an endurir.g memory for them.

The cultural and Political history of Manipur is the history of relations and wars with them The *Sel* (Manipur word for coin) is derived from the word "Selbi" which means the Kabows, the branch of the Tais. We have scanty record to prove that the kings of Manipur had ever fought against the king of Assam. Their relation had been cordial and intimate. The popularity of Bhagavata cult can be associated with the time of king Jaisingh (1759-63, 1763-1798) who took refuge in the court of King Swargadeo Rajeswar Singh in connection with his wars with Burma. Pramattas sings silver coin found its way to Manipur when king Gaurahyam's daugher Kuranganayoni was taken in marriage by the Ahom Raja Rajeswar Singh, Pramatta's successor. Pramatta Singh (Ahom name Sunepha) reigned from 1744 to 1756 A.D.

2. Man in Manipur— Conflicting opinions still hover round the question whether the original inhabitants are Aryans or Mongoloids. The question can be answered from archaeological finds. The fossil of a cuttle fish on the hill on the Imphal-Tamenglong Road, of sea animal near Kangpokpi, Sedimentary and metamorphic rocks in and around the valley show that the valley remained unhabited for quite a long time. But the earliest evidence of human habitation dates to stone age. Another possible connection with the Astraloids of S.E. Asia of the stone age is the stone slabs and implemetns found in Khangkhui and Tharon caves. The palaeolithic pebble tools have been shown to be the work of primitive tribes such as the Pithecanthropus II of Java and China. They are the cave culture so called from the caves and rock cuts where they have found. The Neolithic stone tool is called Varja Shingjong (thunerbolt) whose medicinal property was regarded by the Meithei physicians with profound esteem. This culture in the hills and valley has cultural affinitiy with that of China and S.E. Asia. Many of the hill tribes who still live in the early stage might have emerged from the palaeolithic age. Final word is yet to bysaid about the precise circumstances and manner in which we can fill up the lacunae of our history.

The hill people practised trraced cultivation even now in Purul in Mao north district. The tribal group had to weave a kind of thread from the bark of a tree with a help of a peice of wood. Who are the Meithei people known for their culture. The valley appears to have been unsutitable for human habitation for quite along time. The seven clans had originally come down to the valley from the mountains like Kaubru, Laimatol, etc. several centuries earlier. Almost all anthropologists and archaeologists agree that the clans are more closely sharing a common ancestry with the Mongoloids than with the Indo-Aryans. Although the language spoken by the Meitheis belong to Kukuchin group, the people who include the people of the east and the west have different characteristics. Contanct with so many people, differing from one another in culture and mentality had great effect on Manipur's civilisation and culture and was part of the secret of her own greatness. It is the ability of the people to borrow elements of other culture

and transform them into their sytle. Manipur is considered to be the bridge that served to transmit Indian culture to south-east Asia. However her independent status and geographical isolation led to the creation of a fine culture about which concreate evidence in the realm of dance and music exists when they are evolved by the people. The people starts with the belief that 33 A.D. the year of the coronation of king Pakhangba was the biginning of all things. Writers have been confining to stating that this age for ideas of the primitive Manipuri people and civilisation. But the spade has proved mightier than the pen. Strange indeed were the results that followed the discovery of stone age relics.

3. **Pottery**— What connection exists between Manipuri and other civilisations with which recent excavations have acquainted us? Neolithic culture comprising corded ware, tripod ware and incised type was connected with Pottery. Stone and pottery of the man is more advanced then that of Nongpok keithelmanbi Nagaepik, etc. Manipur is the only country with present Tripod ware culture which had originate from North Chena.. Motifs such as straight lines, natural scenes such as trees, hills, rivers, round figures, points are dots are painted on the pieces of pottery. The remains of jars and painting clearly indicate the emphasis on community dinning and drinking. They produced different shapes which are a delight to the artists. The circular shape of pottery with its emphasis on its breadth and wide neck suggests some sort of cultural diffusion linking Manipur with china. The non-Indian character remained dominant until the Hindus and the Muslims introduced the use of Indian shape and a kind of polished pottery in the 17th century. According to **Chakparol** pitchers appear to have been made after the model of the fruit of a flower called **Nura Khundong** (a kind of flower grown in Manipur).

The Loi (Scheduled tribe) villages which specialises in the art of making pottery are the descendents of war captives from the borders of China. They make pitchers of different types which are well suited to the requirement of the people in connection with rites, cremation, burial and ordinary use. Pitchers with ornamentation and marks are suggestive of their association with the worship of Pakhangba (the ancestor of the kings) and charms against black magic. The burial of unburnt pitcher is a sign of sorcery. Another interesting fact is that earthen pitcher filled with water in a corner of a dwelling house seemed to represent Sanamahi (the tutelary spirit) and his mother Leimarel (Earth-goddess). The shape of the pitcher is round, the significance of which is to depict the shape of the Earth.

Wars with Burma are responsible for the degradation of pottery culture in Manipur. The discovered pottery wheels of W. Yumjao Singh give any hint on this point. Some of the utencils prior to the reign of king Jaisingh (1759-60) are manufactured by a perfect wheel while those found in Sangaithel (Jai Singh's capital) were not so perfect on account of wars with Burma and economic hardship in the State.

4. **Buddhism in Manipur**– The archaeological finds have thrown light on the prevalence of Buddhism which has been a suspect. It is held that none of the kings were Buddhists but some section of the people that is, descendents of Pong (Shan) settlors worshipped Buddha and followed Buddhism though they were merged in the Meithe Hindu population. To quote T.C. Hodson" It is curious to note that complete absence of any trace of Buddhism in Manipur although it is reasonably certain that in historic times there has been a steady intercouse with Buddhist Burma..... There is not a sign of contact with the lofty moral doctrines of Buddhism." Against this view we find scholars who hold that Manipur is one of the land routes through which Buddhist monks passed on their way to south-east Asia. Investigations have resulted in the discovery of the Buddha Saiva stone statues in the hills, images of Buddha without the head, sculptural evidence for Buddha image in the Hindangmayum family in Heirok (a Meithei village in the south eastern extremity of the valley) and ruins of Buddhist temples in Kondong area (near Burma border). and elements in museum collections.

It is further strenthened by a number of finds such as the discovery of Shan mss from the Pong descendents (former Buddhists) and a box containing Buddhist relics such as the Horse, a crown, a human head, the handle of a spear, bead and *pe* (Umbrella meant for the king/god). While digging Lamboi hill the contractor found the latar relics on 9/3/80 and have been kept in the office of the Superintendent of Archaeology. It is the hill in which the monk better known as kabow gossai (shan Buddhist monk) had lived for this meditation under the banian tree. It is situated near the Buddhist settlement known as Kabaw Leikai. We can associate the hill with the cremation and burial of the section of the people on the authority of **Longol Chengoirol.**

Some rulies are found an Sukta and near by Lillocks.

Tantric Buddhism and black magic seem to have been common in North-eastern India. The Buddhist Burmans were the traditional enemy of Manipur. In Kangla (the ancient capital) found a chaisel (bronze vessel used for drinking water) containing the golden peacok, the snake and the corals in 1968. From the inter-pretation of Manipuri pandits it can be inferred that the Burmese during their 7 years' devastation of Manipur (1819-25) let the peacock attack the snake (symbol of Manipuri authority and royal insignia) which means the destruction of Meithei sovereignty and extinction of the nation. The find proved to be valuable in counteracting the Burmese influence through Manipuri method of rites.

5. Love for horse and martial qualities-Horses are frequently mentioned in the myths, legends and literature. One will be struck by the numerous appearance and vocabulary of horses among them before the invasion of the Burmese. Horses are not expensive to rear and feed in the fertile valley. It is even surmised that nobody introduced or imported horse into Manipur which were used in national games, war and transport as did

the Arabs and the tribes of central Asia. According to another opinion horses became common in between 2500 and 2000 BC apparently under the influence from a wave of nomadic proto-Nordic group.

We have been told of the army consisting of chariot, elephant, horse and foot. The Manipuri warriors are said to repel the aggressions upto the Irawady in the heart of the capital of Burma. This is because of superiority of Meithei cavalry and a kind of weapon kown as *Arambai* (dart) and long spears called horse spears and **Huidem** (a small iron spoke). The national game of Polo which is played by every male fit for sitting a horse is a first hand chance for Manipur as the mother land of Polo.

The discovery of figures of horse inscribed in the stones and more recently of silver figures of horse in 1952 with Manipuri small coins from Sagollok, that is shrime of Marjing (presiding deity of polo) has brought into focus this aspect. It was a rule for the kings of Manipur to offer the metal figures of horse to god Marjing for the prosperity of polo in this kingdom. The inscriptions and the weapons connected with the same were able for us not only to parallel or even explain the offering as detailed in our scripture, but also to confirm the authenticity of the passage of royal diaries such as **Cheithrol** *Kumbaba* and **Ningthouraol Lambuba.** Strange to say, horses were unknown to the different tribes of the hills of Manipur.

6. Epigraphs: Inscribed stones, pillars, footprints and relics are found in abundance. They provide striking confirmation of the details of stone culture in their belief. We have heard here the people saying that gods, man, animals and other objects turned into stone due to the blessing or curse of some god and people. The ms Chinglol Laihui describes how living beings such as dog, cow, goat, vampire etc. are burned beneath the stone. In case any being comes out of it something happens in the country.

The object of making a stone or pillar during the life time a chief or a king is according to the belief of the Meitheis and the hills tribes, to make his name being a famous one. It is the symbol of relationship between the hills and the plains. Stone objects are executed not on ordinary times, but on auspicious times in connection with the fixing of boundaries, remembering victory, dedication of land, opening of new villages, etc.

King Khagemba (1597-1652 A.D.) is credited with having erected the first of the six stones at Moirang Santhong. He was advised by the 5 gurus that this act must give a long and prosperous reign which he had. Since then other kings such as Jai Singh, Narsingh, Chandrakirti, Surchandra and Churachand have put up stones burying a small old cup beneath them. The stones are thought to be closely connected with those who erect them so that any accident happening to be a liseving Rajas' stone is held to portend some evil happening to him personally. The earliest inscription so far brought to light is the one issued by king kyamba in the 15th century. At Khoibu there is an underground tunnel which reside Pakhangba, the ancestor of the Ningthouja dynasty and a Shrine to the same god in the grave below the village where there is a hold stone carved with the

representation of the snake form of god Pakhangba. In this grove are 3 stones inscribed in Meithei script said to be put up by 3 kings such as Kyamba, Khagemba and Mungyamba.

Much can be seen of the belief of the people with the inscribed figures of Hindu gods, snake form of Pakhangba (paphal), man, fish, bird, animals. There have been relics of kings like Garibniwaz, Jai Singh, Gambhir Singh, Chandrakirti which have been and still venerated by the Metes and the Nagas. The footprints of Gambler Sing in Chime (Capital of Nagaland) of Maharaja Chandrakirti at a distance of 100 yards from samyui Nui river within the border of Lushai hill, of Devendra Singh in the Bhubon hill (Cachar) and of Garibniwaz on the bank of Junal river (now in Bangladesh) show the nature of Manipur's relationship with these kingdoms, the places visited by them and the geographical extent of places over which they have ruled. Stone inscriptions with figures of elephant, horse and litter supply us with the information that these places are travelled by the kings through them.

All the stone inscriptions were issued in the archaic Manipuri script except those of king Chourajit Singh bearing the date of 1722 Saka/1800 A.D. It contains both the archaic Manipuri script and the evanagari script. Later Bengali script dominated the field when Meithei script is replaced. The Manipuri inscriptions issued in Bengali and Sanskrit language are only two or three which came to my notice in Kirengei and Haochong and those too are not very significant as so-me of them are found inside Manipur. Konthoujam Lairima (goddess of Konthoujam family erected by Maharaja Charairongba in memory of his grant of land is different from the letters found in the existing manuscripts. The stages in the development of Meitei script can be demonstrated through its study.

Another feature of their belief is that stone inscriptions binding on the future kings and whose over encoached them, removal disfigure and pollution of them by someone will bring ill luck to the very person. The belief associated with them are still current since they are based upon the feeling of fear. The secular mind among the Meitheis, the Nagas and the Kukis have belief in this practice. Sacrificial altars, burial places of ancient Meitheis and Moirang were marked by stones. Kuchu, the ancient law court was situated in the south west corner of Kangla. Formerely it had 4 stone pillars where oaths of the tribes and clans took place. The presiding deity of the court is believed to sit there. The ten court officials called *Pongba tara* used to take their seats. From the stone edict issued by king Charairongba in 1698 at the time of his coronaton we can see the Government and administration of justice. It was dedicated to Kasa Lai.

Copper plate inscription— The number of copper plate inscription so far discovered runs into two or three. At least 3 more copper plates have been found in the private possession of the some people. Copper is represented in a few case, notable examples being the plate of king Khongtekeha (763-799 A.D.) and of king Chandrakirti Singh after great

religious persecution of the 18th century. From the study of the first plate discovered by W. Yumjao Singh we now that the Manipuris worshipped the Hindu gods such as Vishnu, Siva, Ganesh, and Devi in the 8th century. King Khontekcha is mentioned as a devotee of Siva and is said to receive a Purana from Siva. It begins with are adorations to Hari and contain words about materials for worshipping Siva, 365 puranic gods, incarnation of gods, Heaven and Hell cycle of birth and death. It further deals with the growing popularity of Vaisnavism and decline of Saivism along with a note on religious syncretism.

However, its veracity cannot be established as the wordings and regional year of king Kbongtekcha written therein have not be corroborated by the Royal chronicle. Whatever is mentioned and transliterated cannot pass as a proven fact. Conflicting version is offered by Pandit M. Chandra Singh on the ground than it is a later invention perhaps to explain the early influence of Hinduism in Manipur.

This can no longer be held with justification as no body can find it at the moment.

Another copper plate charter of King Chandrakirti of Saka 1772/1850 A.D. found in the Visnupur hill (now in the State Museum) records the elevation of 2 favourite servants namely Jaya and Dhana to the high status of Khabam Sanglen (a higher division) from the degraded Tenkhan by the King in the presence of 9 noblemen. The name of the year releaser is mentioned as P. Yuba on the back side. The plate is 6 1/2 inches in length and 1 1/2 inches in breadth. It is free from all manner of meddling. Copper plates in Andro Loi village, Kharam and Sagolmang Naga village remain to be properly edited and its contents to be dealt with in detail. The inscription in Andro describes the do's and don'ts of the people for preserving the sacred fire as per the decree of the King. From the copper plate in Kharam we know that slaves are known to be freed from their masters on payment of prices and allowed to settle in Kharam village by Maharaja Chandrakirti Singh.

Coins (A king of whose evidence has been found is Pakhangba/ Yavistha whom we know from our written Puranas was the first king of Manipur. A coin collected by W. Yumjao refers to second Chaitra samvat/107 A.D. though the name of the person is absent. It is likely that it was struck by the first king in Sanskritised form. The first Meitei king whose initial name occurs in a circular coin is as mentioned by the scholars of numismaties was Urakonthouba (568-658 A.D.). So the opinion of Major M. Meculloch as crediting the sames to Khagemba can be weakened considerably. Coins with initial letters A (Ayangba 821-910 A.D.) and La (Lairenba 1394-1399 A.D.) can be seen on pre-Khagemba Coins found in different coffers. Khagemba otherwise famous by his cultural works was responsible for issuing a bell metal coin with the abbreviated alphabet ma. This was the case with Paikhomba. Meitei script was used in them. The full name and the name or title was absent in them.

King Garibaniwaz completed the coinage system by issuing flat square bell metal coins with the words Sri or Je Sri (Victory to the King), full name of the king and monogrammatic symbols. In the Vaisnava periods coins were issued in Devanagari and Bengali scripts. Gold and silver coins issued by the kings in the 18th and 19th Centuries were designated as *Sanatanga* and *lupa Tanga*. Among the kings who issued a gold coin was Jai Singh II who ruled Manipur for one month in 1822 as a Vassal of Burma during the seven year's devastation. No coin issued by the Burmese between 1819-1826 has come down to us. Sells (the word for coin) were struck to about 8 to 18 grains when the country cannot manufacture big circular coins on account of poor economy. The big circular coins said to have been in use before the war weighed 170 grains/3.5 g.m.

The art of minting and counting coins are special to them. The market value of sell is 428 to one. British or Burmese rupee with some variations. Attempts can be made to explain through the coins why the state was called by different names. It is known to all the names of the Kingdom at different times were **Meitei Leibak, Mekhle, Manipur,** etc. From the examination we know that the name Mekle is associated with the coin of Garibaniwaz. The word Manipur came into currency for the first time during the time of Jai Singh The writings in the later coins describe the Kings as devotees of Radha Govinda comemorative and uncirculated coins are mostly of gold coins executed by the particular family (Aheibam) in the kingdom.

Ancient coins obtained from the underground caves and mounds are considered very sacred by the Manipuri priests and Physicians. Such coins were considered as essential for every rites. They were offered to the gods and goddesses calling upon blessings for the welfare of the country. The high priestess (Maibi) is well-versed in the art of fortune telling and giving predictions through a method which consists of throwing ancient sels (coins) on the floor and reading the positions and giving accurate forecasts. Some of them are famous for such readings in connection with tracing out stolen properties, missing children, civil disputes, etc. They charge a fixed amount for consulting them in a suitable time.

Sanamahi (the creator of Meithei trinity) is represented in the form of coins under the advice of the priests. Different shapes of such coins symbolising the deity of different clans were found in the house of the *piba* or chief of the clan/family. Later the practice of issuing coins symbolising the destructive aspect of Sanamahi (**Apoiba**) has grown with the Meithei people in order to bring about the destruction of their enemy. If the coin is secretly buried in the house or garden of the enemy by a physician with incantation some unhappy happening will follow. They believe in the efficacy of Apoiba coin of the owner of the house or garden in matters relating to madness, death, illness, etc.

7. The disposal of the dead (The most ancient practice can be witnessed from the unearthing of unburnt potteries containing bones and skulls in Keibung and groups of fractional jar burials at Sugnu of the valley. The

dead among the tribals were buried right in the house or compound of the house. At present we find among the Meithei people that most of bodies were creamated while children under two years of age had been buried indicating a cultural fusion and intermingling of people brought on by the colonists. The ms. called **Pakhangba Nungarol** gives a vivid description of the cremation grounds of the first ten kings of Manipur. The **Cheitharol Kumbaba** mentions the enactment of a rule by King Khagemba that the dead were to be buried outside the enclosure of the house. From the Ms. called *Sagok Lamlel Ahanba* we know that four methods of the disposal-committal of the body to the Heibok river near the hill, throwing the body to any nearby water, burial and burning were the practice when the ancient people were on the scene. King Pamheiba under the advice of a missionary of a Ramanandi set, denounced the other methods and devised a method of gathering and burning the bones of his forefathers on the bank of the Ningthi river on 20th Feb/March 1724. Afterwards it was the practice of elaborate cremation rites, which included the raising of stone or brick tombs and offerings for the dead. At Luphousang within the Kangla area the frontal bone of every Raja was placed there for 5 days after cremation.

Towards the end of 1936-37, a coffin of about 12 foot in length was unearthed at Moirang with some pieces of human bones, potteries of a peculiar nature, 12 beads and a piece of silver bangle. Rather survival of burial Practice and the absence of iron material in the coffin being what it is, speak for its antiquity in unequivocal terms here.

The practice similar to that of the Burmese/Myanmarise is noticed among Lois (sheduled caste) of Kameng Village of Manipur Valley. They burn their dead bodies and the bones are thereafter collected in a grave. With these bones they used to bury things of daily necessity such as water pots, cups, dishes, weapons, ornaments, etc. No less than 6/7 mss are found in the cremation grounds of Koudruk Loi Village. The mss are wrapped in a *Leihoura* (a plant whose leaves resembles the plantain leaf and the leave can resist be attack of white one and underground moisture) leaves coated with *Khe* (a black varnish obtained from the juice of the some tree growing in Kabow valley (now a part of Myanmar after 1825) which remain in that for a number of years under the ground. Some of them mss are not less than 150 years old in the estimate of W. Yumjao Singh. One of them collected by him was a mss copy of *Poireiton Khonthokpa* written in a bad handwriting.

Brick making-Cheitharol Kumbaba, the royal chronicle mentions passages in which some rulers such as Khagemba, Paikhomba, Gambhir Singh, Narsingh and Chandrakirti built brick temples for different deities. In the year 1609 Sakabda/1687 A.D. during the reign of King Paikhomba 503 people were engaged for 3 months in brick making according to this palace chronicle/diary. Our tradition gives a description of brick making where labourers of 4 *panas*/division; servants of the king dug out mud and filled brick mounds, task masters watched bricks being made in 14

furnaces. In the brick made from Imphal river mud and straw, the initial letter of the name of the king was stamped. At present no traces are available to us on account of series of wars with Myanmar/Burma and the British. Thanks to the Burmese invasion, most of the bricks were destroyed and thrown into the Imphal river. Throughout the places from Kekru Lake upto Sanjenthong bridge (near the residence of Chief Minister) the elderly people of this place could see in underground water many dusts of the broken bricks which they knew as *Chekthi* (dusts of brick).

Archaeology cannot be a helpful supplement to the above passage of the chronicle except some ruins. To quote Sir James Johnstone "About the year 1250 A.D., a large Chinese force invaded the country and was signally defeated; all who were not killed being made prisoners. The Chinese also taught the art of brick making and erected two solid blocks of massory in the place, between which the road to the Lion gate passed. These blocks were levelled with the ground by the Burmese invaders, but rebuilt on the old foundations by Gambheer Singh."

Kangla Sha (Lion/dragon made of brick and mortar), the status is known to be Meiteis as *Nongsha*/lion, a sacred symbol in the holy texts. It is a mythical animal which is neither a lion nor a dragon as mentioned by the British. It resembles a horned lion with mouth wide open and the hind portion slightly stooped.

With regard to its significance and evolution we are acquainted with the first Nongsha constructed by Maharaj's Chourajit (1803-1813) in front of ancestral coronation Hall (1804) and another second Nongsha constructed by Maharajah Narsingh at Langthabal (Canchipur/Manipur University Campus) and statue of 2 more Nongshas in front of Kangla capital in 1844 after his change of capital from Langthabal to kangla/Modern military area.

The first states of Kanglasha was destroyed by the Burmese in the seven years devastation (1818-1825) and the two states of Nongsha in front of the gate were blown to pieces by the British after their victory in Anglo-Manipuri war, 1891. But the ruins of Kanglasha lying on the gate of Langthabal/University Campus can be discovered by us. The ruins of brick building in the ancient fort of Kangla throne brings into focus the Manipuri's fate in refusing to Burmese and British attack and preserving their freedom.

We felt that the British reference of this Sha/animal did not give the same ideas as that of the Meiteis. They call it Dragon and Marjit has introduced the style of constructing dragon in front of Buddhist Pagodas from the Burmese court. But this theory evoked contrasting opinion from Manipuri Scholars who believe that Kanglasha is a representation of Leiningthou Nongsaba one of the sons of Supreme Deity. The symbol (or idol worshipped by the kings in the palace has since been a continuing feature and adopted a statue of Kanglasha (with 2 horns and a tail) as the state emblem. Its figure shows impress of cultural stream like the Chinese

thought, the Buddhist Burmans and Manipuri belief). On its value has the Manipuri belief and practice been reared and has subsisted for these years in spite of controversies and British objective to reduce Manipur to be the status of a slave nation.

Human and animal sacrifice

8. Human and animal Sacrifice-There is a clear evidence of human sacrifice at some places and burials particularly of war captives and criminals in ancient days. The Naga and Kukis (Living in the Hills) added to the cult of heas hunting and collection of skeleton as bride price. From the remains of skeleton and bones it was confirmed that condemed person was executed in the *utra* of Kangla or a tree at Sugnu (40 miles to the extremes south of Imphal) on the bank of a river under which execution took place. Interesting stories have been discovered giving a decree of the king which orders the death penalty for anyone who rose in rebellion or who had some unauthorised relation with the Ranis of the King.

The condemed man was heavily chained and sent down by boat for execution in ditch of Yotkhokching (hill of Club). The Sugnu villagers sourounded the execution ground and a large hole was dug, and the victim placed alongside. The executioner came forward with a heavy club and clubbed the poor victim to death. The chains were removed intact by cutting off the dead man's feet and taken to the Raja as a proof that his mandate had been carried out, the corpse was pushed into the hole and earthed up, the fact amputated to remove the chain in fact. There were other methods of punishment for the accused as the Manipuris were adverse to taking human lives in ordinary times.

A form of Sacrifice of some solitary way fairer (caught in some unfrequented spot) and animal (pig, mithun, buffalo and ox have been practised by the sanction of the Holly Sacrifices in connection with fertility cult and community welfare. A number of stones were found remembering human and animal sacrifices. In Moirang Khamba the hero is said to have tied a wild bull to a stone before sacrificing it to Lord Thangjing. A stone was placed on a grave in Kangla where *Hingchabi* (Giantess) was said to have been buried alive. According to a British historian Maharaja Gambhir Singh buried alive a Naga boy in Kohima and there-after placed an upright stone bearing carved figures, footprint and Inscription over his grave. This is a proof of his conquest of several Naga Villages including Kohima in 1832, A.D.

Conclusion

The conclusion to which I am led is that the archaeological finds in the hills and plain of Manipur and now displayed in the state Deptts. enable us to construct our history in an authentic way and enlarge our understanding of the same. But the discovery of stone implements has to present us with a new and contemporary background against which we can know the first

human habitation in Manipur with fresh appreciation. It is my intention to offer the following suggestions for advancement in this field.

1. The archaeological movement is as yet in its infant state. No suitable arrangement has not yet been made for excavation of historical and mythological places such as the *Pungs* (mounds), underground caves (*surungs*), and old capitals in order to think in this setting. The finds in accidental digging came only into the possession of scholars and museums later.

2. The site or traditional Kangla (Capital), is being destroyed and threatened by the occupation of 4th, Assam Rifles Since 1891 A.D. It is further destroyed due to the making of Bus parking and opening of patta lands and Dukans near walls of Kangla fort being undertaken by the Janta Ministry during 1979-80. Investigation is being done by the experts of the Archaeological Survey to present the old ditch of Kangla from doing so. Again no follow-up action has so far been taken though the Government is committed to ensuring an early vacation of the area of the Kangla to its original historical glory.

3. Under Manipur Ancient and Historical movements and Archaeological sites and Remains Act many sites have so far been identified and were also in progress and 25 sites have been declared as protected with effect from march 31, 1980 by the state Govt. Add to this, survey of several regions from the point of views, monuments and relices have to be done by the experts. Much improvement is called for in actual working.

4. Adequate funds must be made available for the copying, editing and interpretation of the stone, copper plate and other inscriptions. Whatever inscription we have at present is not based on systematic attention. A series of Scientific editing of all of them have been keenly felt. Efforts to get the research studies published with the patronage of the Government must be made as early as possible.

5. Aesthetics and iconography being an important branch of Archaeology, one Art Archives for preserving be phases of Manipuri Art must be established in Imphal under the initiative of the state.

6. Private museums have been recently set-up in Imphal and Kakching. More of the same should be given priority, in view of the fact these museums collection could be a great value to the further generation provision for special grant must be made by the Govt of Manipur.

7. A separate Archaeology department with a capable director in charge of it can be suggested. The research field holds endless possibilities in the state for combined Scholarly and state venure as yet unexplored. Laboratory techniques and newly emerging information technology and its application to Archaeology will be felt for it captures human experience through the ages.

8. Exhibition displaying upto-date archaeological findings such a art object, Sculptures etc., must be held in Imphal in conjunction with museums, Universities and other departments, of this state.

9. There has not been the time to devote to archaeological discoveries and the same detailed scrutiny which has been devoted for unsound literature and propaganda works. Although some have been published about them, the conclusions at this state are not final. The different fects differ by money years on any issue. We still cherish the hope in high level seminars and conferences to be held on the Archaeology of Manipur.

10. Some of the priceless paintings (of Bhadra Singh), Sculptures and art objects, which were less than 75/100 years old are being outside the registration and antiquities Act. There is the danger of destructions of rare and valuable objects by insects. With a view to preserving them it is the duty of the state Government to make suitable legislation so as to preserve them in good conditions.

10. Archaeological evidence and interpretations imply an examination of accepted formulations on Manipur's past and objective of the 19th century historical writing. Consciousness of a distinct nationality was intensified by the Scholars through the pre-Aryanised roots of Manipuri culture and popular traditions and new archaeological finds. Many were dissatisfied with the prevailing historiography based on documents and written sources alone on a different level, genealogy and chronology of the people have been revised in the light of eastern and south east Asian sources.

A new history of Manipuri People instead of a history of Manipur must begin with a great attention through these discoveries.

11. A new history covering all complexities/aspects and pre-history as well as Aryanisation of Manipur-its antecedents, extent and impact, has become a major concern for all scholars and writers at present. Unlike O.K. Singh and his followers, A.K. Sharma and S.B. Ota, of Archaeological survey of India (Pre-history Branch), Nagpur, looked at urn burials along the two banks of Iril River in relation to Gangetic plain, Bihar, Bengal and Southern India. In their observation there is no Burmese influence in the burial customs of Manipur. viz. beads of semiprecious stone, terracotta and male and female burial practices. Scholars continue to carry on a dispute on this point in their own styles.

12. Following the excavation and discovery of some objects Kangla and ancient capitals like Jainagar (Sangaithel), Langthabal/Canchipur, Chajing, Nongpok Ingkhol, Mayang Imphal, etc. came to assume vital significance in Manipuri mind. They are subject to recurrent waves of settlement by different groups and communities and tribes. Border areas like Kakching, Wangjing, Pallel, Jiri, Tongjei Maril, etc. were the scenes of many battles, between the invaders and the Meiteies (ruling families). Our books and Chronicles tell us of the countless heroics performed by them. During these years, Khongjom developed into a place of pilgrimage, visited

even by Meitei Brahmans from Myanmar who had annually visited it during the British Regime (Without tourist facilities and transport system).

Ancient Kangla (Capital of the Ningthouja Dynasty) was far more extensive than we have seen at present. i.e. after the great Anglo-Manipuri war, 1891 A.D.

Notes and References

1. W. Yumjao Singh : **An Early of History of Manipur,** 1966, p.p. 138-142; **Report on the Archaeological** studies in Manipur, Bullitin No.1, Imphal 1935, p.p. 70-72.
2. Archaeology of Manipur Vol.2, published by the Department of State Archaeology, Palace Compound Imphal, 1994.
3. Thong Nambolbi (Hump Bridge-China Type), on the Bank of Nambul River was declared to be protected by the Government in 1994. It was to be dismentled by the State Engineering Department according to new Imphal City plan. The public objected to that scheme and demanded its Preservation under the Act. The author presided over the public meeting on the Hump Bridge in which many scholars and pundits participated for a firm stand. In 1990. I was so happy to see the Government Policy in declaring it to be a protected monument in tune with public sentiment.
4. I went over through the Manipur *Puyas* (manuscripts) viz. **Langol Chingoirol, Kangla Laipham etc.** for incorporating a mass of information in this field. They discrible real life and habits.
5. L. Ibungohal Singh and N. Khelchandra Singh, (Ed.) **Cheitharol Kumbaba,** Imphal, 1969 p.p. 622-23.
6. Sir James Hohnstone, **My Experiences in Manipur and Naga Hills,** Delhi, p.p. 1971, p.p.22-23
7. The native Manipuri weapons like **Khaining Ta (Spear), Thengchap** (Sword with ring of 2 inches) and **Huidem** (pointed small spear of 2 feet used for direct and physical encounter) have been kept in the museum. **Huidem** of 2.5 kg. in weight has been unearthed while digging a place in Kakching in 1987.
8. The state Dept. of Archaeology has acquired ancient Kangla fort on 13/8/93 formally and founded a living museum in Sikta Imphal East on 18/10/96 under an Act of 1976. Planning Kangla after the shifting of Assam Rifles is under active consideration.

5

ANCIENT RELIGION OF MANIPUR

Religion is a complex affair to be described or defined in a few words. It arouses different interpretations in the opinion of great thinkers and mystics. Two aspects being folk/primitive religion and a highly organised religion had been bought to the fore. Primitive religion describes the needs of men arising from the environment and Society at different levels. Religion is a sociological phenomena. The latter may be compared to a three storeyed building. In the ground floor is man himself with his various needs like food, health, education, Arts and Sciences, trade and industry, administration and defence. It was the bounden duty of man to see to these aspects of religion. At the next higher level (first floor) come all the founders, prophets, incarnations, holy texts, churches, temples, distinguishing works and rituals out of which the spirant is free to make his choice. In the top floor, the highest form of religion is the quest for god, the creator. The ground is the support of other two storeys. If the above two storeys are destroyed, the groundwork of religion with still remain. But if we take away the ground floor, the entire edifice of religion with its gods and goddesses, scriptures and discipline come tumbling down. The importance of people known as the ground floor must be highlighted in any case.

Gods are all one though they have various local names for purpose of identification. Humanity is one in spite of countless families. Similarly true religion is only one in spite of various names, prophets and rituals of the land and the people. True religion as right conduct and a good way of life is the same for all.

We propose to discuss the ancient religion of Manipur in light of above remarks and see whether it deserves the name of universal religion.

The People

The majority of the Meiteis profess themselves to be Hindu Vaishnavas. Some follow the traditional Meitei religion while a few are Christians and fewer still are Muslims through intermarriage.

The Meiteis comprise the people of 7 Yeks/Salais (clans) who adhered to the traditional custom and taboo. At present they have been influenced by Hinduism, especially Vaishnavism and Shaivism. The ancient period present us with the history of the migrations of the Shans/Pongs, Kabows, Tripuris, Chacharies, etc. which had begun to pour their streams into Imphal valley but of these emerged the Meiteis and with its racio mixtures, dialects and its development at the Social and political evolution. The early people include such tribes as Shelloi Langmai, Lok-Haokha, Lira

Khongnang, Thanga Kambong and some Tibeto-Burman groups such as Haokap Ching shang, Mon-Khmer and Chakpas (Lois). There was the social barrier between the Meiteis and the Lois, the unclean ones being the groups who mixed up with the former after undergoing some purification ceremony. Side by side with the above inhabitants of the plain were no fewer than 29 groups of scheduled tribes. In an interesting book, **Poireiton Khunthokpa** (migration of Poireiton, one of the earliest mss in archaic manuscript) we are told how some of the Kuki groups such as Gangte, Paite, Simte, etc. accompanied Poireiton in his colonisation. The tribals still retain much of their habits and way of life in spite of their conversion to Christianity.

In the ancient religion of Manipur several strains can be seen. It is these strains which will form the subject matter of this paper.

Meitei Account of Creation

The typical Manipuri account of creation is set forth in **Leithak Leikharol** and most of the lores of rituals and physicians. What has been said about the myth of creation and evolution is applicable to the Meitei myth of creation/Leishemba. We may attempt to demonstrate that Hanka period parallels the different early geological stages of the earth. The Chak/period falls into four Hayi (Satya), Haya (Treta), Langba (Dwapur) and Konna (Kali) which form the periods of human habitation and political development. Before the creation of the earth everything was in darkness. The *Puyas* claim that the most excellent **Shidaba**/Almighty gave birth to air, cloud, water, fire, etc. The theories of geology very well attest the early condition of the earth as being covered with water, clouds, etc. But it is to be noted that the Almighty brought forth several gods, goddesses, the Sun and the Moon from His own body to help him in His work by making them to function their tasks. The particular acts of creation by God in our lore such as grass, plants, **Ngaprum,** (mudfish; eel), frogs and monkeys in our myth are connected with particular geological periods. Creation of man by Sanamahi in the image of God is in the last. Thus we find in our lore the same sequence in the order of evolution as modern science sets. forth. In them the sky and the earth are conceived as male and female respectively. Our creation story bears close resemblance to that given in the Assyrian and the Biblical account. In them the world is preceded by a watery chaos; (2) the conception of the struggle between creator and destroyer as a consequence of which several beings are formed, mystical ideas originated stand in parralism to those of Assyrian story. (3) The creation of woman from man as found in Babylonian myth tallies with the statement that Goddesses (Leimarel, Nongthang Leima) are produced from the Immortal God.

However, we notice some fundamental differences. In the biblical account there was light before creation whereas in Manipuri myth

night/darkness preceded nungthil/day. The appearance of human being is certainly later that of celestial bodies, trees, animals etc.

The Biblical account is sternly, monotheistic whereas Meitei myth is polytheistic although the idea of god was present.

Ruling deities and idea of Lai/God

The Meiteis worship a Supreme God known as **Mapu/Sidaba** Atiya, the immortal Guru. He is variously identified as the Pole Star or Sorarel/Indra. In later religious thought he was associated with a feminine divinity called Loimarel/Earth goddess, an important lai/deity of the house, The bi-sexual 'Two Persons in God' postulated by the ancient Meiteis has its basis in prayers. The high god has no direct dealings with men. He is remembered and invoked in chanting incantations. Prayers and thanks giving to the lesser gods refer to him indirectly. All the Yumlais (household deities) Lamlais (deities of the countryside), Umanglai (forest deities), etc. were believed to be under his order. Other important divinities were kind hearted Sanamahi, the creator, Pakhangba, the destroyer, who was youngful and handsome, Nongpok Ningthou, the god of strength and central deity of Laiharaoba (merry making of god), Marjing, the deity of Polo, Wangbarel, the presiding deity of water, the guardian of the southern direction, Panthoibi, the goddess of energy and of many forms, Phouoibi, goddess of corn, etc. They are known to adore 243 gods and 162 goddesses in addition to the members of Trinity. The belief and practices throbs with the worship of Nature-Numit/Sun, Tha/Moon, Stars, Mei/fire, water/Irai Leima, hills, etc. Each hill had its own divinity. Gods of **Koubru,** Thangjing, **Marjing, Thanga etc. were personified.** Lesser gods include various **functional divinities, spirits** of dead ancestors and divine kings.

The family and social life of the gods was identical with that of the human beings. Gods are said to have fallen in love with other goddess or human suitors, eloped and married like men. They held assemblies to discuss important issues, they quarrelled and even forget among themselves, tilled the land, use metals, tools and invented the art of reading and writing. Some of the Meitei divinities such as Thangyong, Thoubal Haoba, etc. gave names of the places of Manipur. Every hill, village and part of the valley was sacred shrines for purposes of worrship and pilgrimage. Each Meitei house must have three sacred places namely **Sanamahi Kachin** (south-west coner of a house), **Leimarel Kachin** (just to the north of Sanamahi Kachin) and Phunga Lairu (hearth). The kings are known to travel as far as 60/70 miles to seek the blessing of the deity at famous springs/tunnels of the hills and plains of hill tops.

The Meiteis have developed their conception of divinity in the traditional context. The concept of god as **Lainingthou** (king of gods), Leimarel (Empress), a judge who is seated on a threestaired seat, possessor of many eyes, hands, possessor of martial names and attributes such as **Liheiba** (expert archer), holder of disc, thunderbolt and some nicknames,

etc. reflect the Meitei consciousness to attribute the empirical conceptions to the deity. Like the Japanese they addressed the deities as the forefather/great grandfather or great grandmother and thereby treating themselves as grandsons and daughters in prayer. Tantric attributes such as Hung, Ha, Ra, Sa, Anji, etc. and guru cult seem to be deep-rooted in their mind. They respected name (metaphysical and empirical attributes) that when they recited or read the text in praise of the concerned deity they plastered the space with water, offered pieces of gold, silver and sweatments to the diety. An oath taking in the name an **Umanglai**/forest deity is still binding on the people. Some of the deities like Sanamahi, Pakhangba, Wangbarel, Nongplok Ningthou and Panthoibi had connections with some tribals such as Tangkhals, Chothes, Purums etc. and their cults were adopted by these tribal communities and scheduled castes before their Christianisation.

There are special worships of these deities during a year. The annual **Laiharaoba** ritual (community dance), a traditional feature of the life of the Meiteis was first organised by the Gods at the time of creation. Mankind is to imitate the play and rejoicing of the gods and goddesses. All through these worships the **maibas** and **maibis,** (priests and priestesses) keep conducting the ritual with a number of dos and don'ts. The more devout among the worshippers observe fast, take bath, put on clean and ceremonial clothes, and offer the sacred materials to the deity for the fulfilment of their wish, cure from some disease or a solution to other problems. The atmosphere is kept away always from pollution and uncleanliness.

There are several methods of divination or predicting the future to find out whether the devotee's desire, progress of the family/group or the state may be assured or not. The common methods are oracles and trance with the ringing of bells on the part of Maibi, **Konyairol** (to put on pieces of gold and silver or leaves at the feet of the important deity) and **senmit yengba** (seeing the position of the coins), **Mingsen Kanglon** (seeing something through a mirror), **Khutlou** (by touching numbers), **Chengmit**/rice and **Singkoi** (sticks).

The Cult of Snakes

The Meiteis raised worship of a snake spirit, Pakhangba to a high pitch since this deity is the divine ancestor of the ruling dynasty. Of all the forms it assumed, that of **lairen**/python was special and was venerated by all **Yeks** and Salais. The Meitei snake cult admits of several layers-that of the Dravirs, Aryans, Naga culture, Mons of Burma and the Khmers of Combodia in different periods of history. To them **Patphal** (diagram of Pakhangba) is symbolic of the Universe and intricate mechanisms of human body like the **Kula Kundalini** of **Hindu Sadhana.** To them snake/python stands not only for the peace and prosperity of the state but also for causing **Laichuba** (a kind of poisonous gas coming from meeting the **lai**). Utmost case is bestowed on the categories of pythons and observance of rituals with mantras and puja materials for averting the wrath of the snake god and

counteracting the gas, The scholars gave us books like **Taoroinai Yangbi, Taorainai bija, Taoroinai Picha, Pakhangba Laihui** and physicians lore. The snake cult as found in Manipur presents a rich field of research to students of Anthropology and social sciences.

Cult of Image Worship

Does our sacred texts/lores call for idol worship or god with form. Most of our texts sanctioned the worship of idol as one of the essential features of Meitei thought. It was stated in **Panthoibi Khongul** that the Khaba clans worshipped the image of Panthoibi after making wooden masks. King Kangba the first king of Hayi chaka installed the *sen* (coin) image of God Sanamahi and worshipped regularly. The idol of sky god/**Atiya Shidaba** is fabled to come out of the small underground tunnel at Khurai and became the favourite deity of Pakhangba. The Meiteis realised the significance of two fold representation of God-(1) with form as we saw above and as the Konmai of Laiharaoba (merry making of God) and[2] without form as the void as found in the last part of Laiharaoba.

Cult of Gurus/Kurus

Every householder is virtually the priest of **imunglai** such as Sanamahi, Leimarel and **Phunga** (hearth). The svstem of counducting elaborate rituals has developed on two classes of priests/Amaiba and priestesses/Amaibi along with a number of religious and customary institutions fostered by the kings. They bespeak even to day of the salient features of Meitei philosophy and religion. The Meiteis were in the habit of respecting saintly men and women who were advanced in thought and were able to mediate between god and men. Some of the **amaibas** have sacrificed their lives for the nation. The veneration of three mortal Gurus (Mangang, Luwang and Khumal), court pandits of king Naothingkhong, etc. (later 10 pandits of king Khagemba) and the system of training them for future priesthood under an able guide (guru) sprang up. It is to the credit of them that Meitei language was reduced to writing and literature was written. The people benefitted from this system. In Meitei belief the grace of a guru is greater than that of god since they claimed a great task in the task of human spiritualisation.

Their mode of living was different from that of the common people and pursued such official works of the state as the compilation of royal chronicle, chanting magical charms such as *Ougri*, exercising the evil spirits, etc. It was incumbent upon the **Amaibas** of the court to perform **Thengkou** dances with spear or with sword and a shield. The purpose of which is preservation of the Universe/(Ougri Hungche as performed by 9. divine youths and 7 nymphs) and destruction (ougri Hangel as done by Awang Kauburu and goddess Arangbi on a broken raft). In spite of heavy responsibilities they considered to be a privilege to be a royal priest/Amaiba and take in the country's works.

Closely connected with the above is the cult of Amaibis/priestesses which is indicative of theogany. Umanglais (forest deities) had maibis in three Loisangs/categories of offices-Shanglen, **Nongmai** and **Phura**. Their presence and guidance is peculiar for such rites as annual offering of rice to the deity, summoning of gods' spirit from water, merry making of gods, *chenghongba* (special offer of rice) to Sanamahi and Pakhangba, etc.

As a rule entry into this cult is made by tragic call of fate and not by their wish. Until they received proper training and are approved by the king, the **maibis** (male or female) could not get this nurselike uniform and could afford to conduct the rites. They may reside in the palace or their house where they got their food grains, coins and clothes from their work. In general they did not take some kinds of fish and were very fond of using sweat scented flowers, washed clothes and clean fire, they had peculiar accents in speaking.

The cult of **Maibi** is much prevailing in the survice that their functions at present are ritual, social and economic. The institution of maibi and **Laimanai** (a woman wedded to god) will be perpetuated when they promote peace, harmony of the society and render a great service to the family.

As has been the case all through our study of the **Devadasi** custom of South India, we do not notice any crime, evil or downword social order and government legislation in the thoughts, words and deeds of the Maibis.

Totemism and Food Genna

We have definite evidence of totemism in the early religious and social system of Manipur. As far as we know, 7 clans had traditions of descent from 7 goddesses and 7 days of the week which had the head of animals such as the head of tiger, elephant, buffalo, etc. The reference to *Nonglum* (cosmic egg) took the imagination which is one evidence of the totomistic origin in a broad sense. Totemistic survival is the tradition identifying snake form of Pakhangba with the founder of Ningthouja/ruling dynasty. The royal dyansty put the python totem/*Paphal* (diagramatic representation of Pakhangba) on the flag, pillars, inscriptions and holy books. The dynasty does not take *Ngaril* (col, fish resembling snake and *Ningthourembi* (a kind of plant). The prohibition of eating and killing of certain plants, birds and animals by a particular clan confirmed the existence of this cult. The members of Moirang Yek/clan did not kill *Sendrang* (Sparrow) and abstained from taking Moirangkhanam (a kind of plant). Of course we do not have evidence of surnames which bore the names of birds, animals etc. It was a taboo for the Chenglei clans to kill pigeon since they believed that the spirit of their forefathers took this form. The existence of totemistic culture and different beliefs for different groups played a great role in early life.

The origin of the legends or taboos has not been clearly explained in the books. We have a huge literature which show the mysterious linking of certain items of foods, fruits, flower with the Meitei people. The ban on

eating the vegetables on specific dates is elaborated in a treatise known as *Tharon* (lore of months).

There is another type of food genna known as *Yellhennba* to be observed in connection with the rite of *Chup Saba*. It is a rite with a request to Sun-god not to occur the catastrophe faced by the deceased person to his line, family, etc. again in future. An *amaiba*/an expert in traditional lore is obliged to conduct the rite in cases of abnormal death in a family. The tabooed food of a concerned clan/surname if any is ascertained from the *Piba* (chief of a clan) or elderly people by the priest at the time of performance. It is one to be replaced by another tabooed food or any object not frequently touched by children.

But the approval of the assembly of the members of the clan including the Piba is necessary for declaring the taboo of the affected family. Any violation of the formal oath by touching the totem is thought to cause illness or extraction of teeth of the person.

It has been found in Manipur during king Pamheiba's time that all Meiteis tabooed *Nongkhrang*, a kind of thorny plant after a bath in Lillong river. It is known as *Nongkhrang Iruppa* (oath taking/water with a branch of Nongkhrang) at the time of embracing Ramandi Vaishnavism at the instance of Shantidas Gossai.

Totemism and food genna achieves fellowship within a particular Yek/Salai although it fosters the growth of religious and spiritual ideas. The members of the clan came into cohesion in such social and religious rites.

Ancestor Worship

The Meiteis had a well-developed cult of ancestor worship which compelled comparison with those of the Chinese, Japanese, Khasis, Indo-Aryans, etc. The ancestral spirits of each family, sib, and clan were worshipped under various names such as *Sagei Lai* (ancestor of a particular clan), *Apokpa* (proginator of a clan), *Ibudhou Purel Nakakpa* (Adi Purusha/Great grandfather), *Kasarel* (a common name for the ancestral spirits), etc. The apokpas were Pakhangba for the Ningthouja, Pureiromba for the Angoms, Poireiton for the Luwangs, etc. whose rituals were connected with specific puja materials. A manuscript called *Apokpa Thounirol* dwells on details of the puja on sacred days of each clan. A smaller worship was also in vogue with regard to the worship of *Sagi Apokpa* where they were stated to offer cooked food, dal, sheath fish, banana, cloth, betal nut and leaf and sel (coin) to the spirit (deceased males of the previous three generations of a family) after sunset on a new moon day.

The priests had the iron figures of Apokpa made after a small *Lep Sumbal* (a kind of mortar) and installed it in a sacred place called Khallong/Thembi. Great sanctity is attached to the work of fencing the area with stone or bamboo, offering of flags, canopy and rice by the members of the clan/surname.

The Meiteis believe enjoined on every people to worship *Kasai Lai* on the occasion of *Epanthaba* (6th day of the delivery of a child), *Chaumba* (rice giving ceremony to baby) and *Langban Chanou tamba* (feeding the people like the Hindu tarpan). When a householder is disturbed with masterbation, offering and made to *kasa* for giving offspring and material prosperity of the family.

Kasarel, Kasa Ningthou Sorarel or Lai kasha is an early Meitei god. He is mentioned in our encantations and treaties as the supreme God Sorrel on more than one occasion. He is claimed as the presiding deity of Heaven (Kasha Mashaikon/Khamnung Kaokhangkon). He is the beloved of the masses and all those who pray before Him sincerely in Him will fulfil their wish.

Cult of Evil Spirits, Nymphs and Vampires

One will feel attracted by Manipur's cult of 7 *Helois*/nymphs or Apsaras, 61 Sharoi Ngarois/ evil spirits, Laimbus/ Laihenbi (enemies of God) which are intrinsically destructive, *Apoibas* (destructive aspects of tutelary deiteis such as Sanamhi, Leimarel, *Soirels* (children died at the time of Manipur is dotted with hills, lakes and meadows where the forces of evil have their abode. Another interpretation by which the Sharoi Ngaroi are made is that they are the attendants/ganas of gods and the evil spirits as understood by some.

Another belief that figures among them is the cult of Vampire (Hing = alive, chabi to eat), a class of physical woman who could project their astral bodies to enter into the body of those persons whom they wish to attack. It is thought that Panthoibi (Durga) worked through them. The spirit declared everything through the medium or ravings of the person who are afflicted by vampire (not material vampire who eat human flesh and animals). Thus the suffering person explains the phenomena to be due to possessions, psychological defects, etc. A peculiar mode of treatment of these illnesses is the uttering of incanations and performance of rituals with puja materials. Ritual and medicinal works and lore of deities are later compositions (such as Thebarol Leimarel Shekring) where one can see the methods of taming wild animals, exorcising the spirits and vampires in greater and smaller measure.

The relationship of this sickness and cure is particularly intimate Modern method of treatment was no-existent. The treatment was very much a part of every life of the people. In fact works on the black magic, sorcery and tantrism were legion.

Blood Sacrifice

The word *Iratpa* literally means a sacrifice of a living being. Practice of Karat (animal), Morat (Bird/fish) and Ngarat (Human beings) sacrifices has reference to the desire of deities who commissioned human beings to perform. They practised human sacrifice on grounds of sorcery, (b) satisfaction of vengeance (execution of enemies and crimnals), (c)

cannibalism of spirits (at the time of constructing bridge, inaugrating tanks, salt mines and making river bands). They thought that the deities need human blood to make the earth fertile. Head hunting was common among the early people. Referring to human sacrifice J. Shakespeare wrote :"I have also been told that a man was actually killed and his blood, hair and nails taken to Tengnoupal on the Burmese road and buried there, beneath a stone in order to drive back the spirits from Burma, from whose onslaughts the country was thought to be suffering" (The Religion of Manipur, Section on Human sacrifice).

The Manipuri *Ponnas* in Burmese court influenced the king of Burma to perform human sacrifice on this ground as we read from the *Encyclopaedia Britanica.* What the British writers remarked in the 19th and 20th centuries must apply to ancient Manipur in spite of altered circumstances and changes.

It is difficult to think whether the surrender of a person to the deity or self denial got fully explained in Manipuri practice of this period. Probably the victims were to lose their lives forcibly without any consideration of sex, caste or age. Manipur had an institution known as *Churanthaba* (person sent out to seize or to steal some solitary way farer/boys after dark in some unfrequented spot for killing) although it was not frequent or regular except on times of abnormal circumstances or when matters were not moving well in the state. Kangla, Sugnu etc. were places of sacrificial rituals in the post. The kings have attached special importance to this celebration for strengthening this position.

Sacrifice of animals, birds and fish-The early people of this land lived by hunting and rearing herds of sacrificial animals such as cock, pigs, dogs, buffaloes, cows, etc. The pig seemed to have the common victim. Sacrifices involving the killing of cows, bulls, 7 kinds of fishes and animals, 100 kinds of animals, etc. to which they made reference gave a glimpse of old faith.

Ngamu (loach) and sheath fish were offered to act as mediator with god to lay down their lives for the sake of human beings.

In striking contrast with the above methods we find that long lived birds, animals/*Laishas* were sacred in their faith. Sangai (Brow-entered deer), cow (Sanyai Leima), white elephant and some animals traditionally associated with the deities as the mounts were worshipped by them according to their own rites.

Megalithic Culture

Early Meiteis were prone to believe in the magical power of big stones, their shape, colour and small stones having protective powers. The belief is responsible for costly rituals, magic formulae, presiding deities and composition of treaties such as *Nonglon Thambal.*

Perhaps for the Meiteis of old times the erection of stones which involved the toil and treasure was exclusively done by the rulers and chiefs of clans. The primary object were to save them from oblivion, to assure

long reign and to ward off the evil influences. Stones were raised at *Laiphams*/shrines or important places with the offering of gold and silver particles and sacrifice of animals.

There is a reference in *Panthoibi Khongun* in which Khaba's wife and his parents realised the divinity of Panthoibi and implored her to visit Khaba's place. It is further stated that Khaba's wife erected a memorial stone and a temple for goddess Panthoibi after receiving her with the blowing of conch and pipe and preserving her clothes and ornaments in a scared basket. Later this cult grew into an important one in association with that of departed ancestors. (Instances are on the record that a stone was placed on the grave of a *Hingchaba* (Chinese cannibal) in Kangla. The frontal bone of every dead Raja was placed in a place called *Luphousang* for 5 days after cremation). We cannot say whether the megalithic culture was the centre of ancient religious life of the Meiteis as in the case of the Tangkhuls, Marrings, Kabuis, Khasis and Mizos or not. But it is a fact that it linked the dead with the living, the past with the present, Heaven with earth. The beliefs, curious stories and practices widely current among clans (such as Moirang, Khuman, etc.) suggest a pre-historic link of the Meiteis with people of South East Asia, China and Mundas of Chotanagpur plateau. There is a mention of monolithic structures in T.C. Hodson's.

Naga Tribes of Manipur about the Naga and kuki villages. The monolith near Kacha Naga village of Puilong Tuwaishong is ornamented with carvings representing man, animals lines, etc.

Tree Cult

The Meiteis are said to develop their culture and civilization from Umang/grove of the deities. They believed that trees and creepers as the manifestation of spirits are born in such forms as the result of their action in the former birth. Trees growing in the grove of Lord Wangbarel in Sugnu are known as *Mitam U* (representative) of the reigning king). The belief is attached to tree culture that some of the sacred trees like Uningthou (a large ever green tree), Uhal (Tulasi/Urena lobeta and Sanakhongnang (golden tree-pipal tree) must be dedicated or married to *Urong Ningthou*, one of the manifestation of Lord Kaubru) with proper rites. Religious and ritualistic as the Meiteis they launched upon the course of social festivities. It is named as *Uhongba* which means the sanctification of a tree after a formal inauguration. A cloth was tied around the tree as the cloth of the Lai/deity or as the receptacle of the clothes. It is believed that the bareness of a fruit giving tree will be cured by doing so. It is adopted for observance by the kings or the dignified persons or the women of the royal house for the welfare of the people.

A look into our *Puyas* and rituals give us some rituals such as *Ukrong Hongba* (annual shraddha ceremony or Rathyatra), *Ukai Kappa* (shooting the scare crow) and *Ushin Touba* (substituting one's life by the tree). when exactly and how early they celebrated these rituals may be debatable. But as

early as the days of Haya Chak and myths we get references to them in such terms as if they were significant in their life.

Ukrong Hongba is a ceremony of offering made to the deity in honour of the dead relative after a year. The origin was traced to Amaiba Poireiton and his sister Leinaotabi Sarik who taught the people that the spirit of the dead (who lived in the air, animals, etc.) would bestow offspring, wealth and happiness to the surviving members through this rite.

Ushin is connected with the sickness and cure. Under this belief the fate of a short-lived man or ill man is transferred to the tree which die for the former. It rests on the law of substitution which prevails up to this time not only among the Manipuris but also the world over.

Ukai kappa (Shooting the scare crow or fixed sign) The ancient king or the chief of a group has to shoot his arrows at the selected points of a wood and omen is taken for the state of the community in the months to come. The Meiteis, Moirangs and different scheduled caste groups (lois) did not stop with their ritual interpretations but exhibit their marksmanship and efficiency in shooting. Later the festival was merged with *Kwak Kappa* (shooting of the crow) and *Ravan Kappa* (rescue of Sita by Rama after killing Ravana). Vijaya Dasami day is observed as *Ukai Kappa* with all the rejoicings in this kingdom.

Raths for Realisation of Salvation

The paths for God-realisation are commonly known as Yoga-Sadhana which implies a series of disciplines on the physical, ritual, mental levels. It call for a transmutation of human personality into a divine one. It starts with self-disciplines and abandonment of evil nature cultimates with the acquisition of godly qualities. The Meiteis felt the inadequacy of the outward ways of propitiation. They had faith in mystical exercises about good health, longevity and attainment of supernatural powers. For spiritual life they began with body, the awareness of pose in sleeping, eating and practised such postures as *Khongrai Thabi* (equal pose) of Lord Pakhangba; *Gira Thangba* pose of god Sanamahi (crushing impulses for meditation), pose of Soubol Lairembi (placing the heel over arms).

Inhaling and exhaling of respiration with Ha/fire, Ra/water and Sa/air are necessary sadhanas. Rules were laid down by which long life was possible through practice of several *Chingkheirols*, cultivation of ethical qualities, fixation of mind, etc. were the paths pursued by Gugus, divine kings and scholars. The Meitei path is very close to the different yogas of Hinduism with little difference. The Buddhist methods of getting *Nirvana* through eightfold means, insistence or human effort unaided by priests and incarnations are contrary to Manipuri belief. However the Meiteis put the middle path and *mahayana* practices into effective use.

Influence of Hinduism and Buddhism

Manipur's contact with India, Pong and parts of Burma/Myanmar may well date back to early centuries of the Christian era. Gradually Indian

settlements and the settlements of the Pongs and the war captives from the border of Burma had grown in parts of the valley. Later immigrants and traders, Yogis and the Mayons, Bungals, etc. have penetrated further and further, the life of the local inhabitants got influenced more and more by the Hindus from the rest of India. The evidence is furnished by copper plate inscription of king Khongtekcha, increasing use of Sanskrit and Bengali language, marriage of a Manipuri king Naothingkhong/Kwakpa with princess Chingurembi/Mayang Leima.

But Hinduism could not make much headway in Manipur on political grounds. From the 15th century onwards Hindu missionary activity began to be wide and the people have been enchanted to Hinduism with much patronage and zeal of the rulers.

We often discuss whether Manipur was in intercourse with lofty moral principles of Buddhism or Buddhist tantric practices. Orthodox scholars and some British writers like T.C. Hudson argue that there is complete absence of any trace of Buddhism in Manipur. We have to study Buddhism on archaeological, ethnographic, Mahayana tantric grounds and philosophical concepts. It entered the life of the Meiteis in different ways (1) In the centuries before the Christian era, the Buddhist missionaries went to south east Asian countries via Manipur (2) From Manipur Toren Kha, the emperor of Khaba dynasty attempted to convert the people of Buddhist faith at about 300 B.C. But Manipur did not feel pursuaded to accept it on account of the reaction of the people. This king has also been identified with one of the sons of Kuptreng (3) Buddhist cultural waves with the Shan/Pong and Chinese invaders in different historical periods. The captives were scattered all over Manipur, different Loi villages such as Chakpa Phayeng, Chakpa Leimaram, Kameng and Kabaw Leikai which had became important centres of popular Buddhism, Images of Buddha, relics, Shan manuscripts, etc. have been discovered at these places. Fashion of Buddha-Siva culture, coils of meditation and pagoda shaped structures of Manipur smacks of Buddhist culture.

3. The tantric Buddhist word 'Hum' (air/other) is found associated with the hymns, incantations and attributes of important Meitei deities. This practice is Buddhistic.

I should like to urge re-thinking of Buddhism in Manipur in the light of new findings and techniques of modern research.

The Meities believed in the concepts of bound and released souls, passage of soul after death, Heaven and Hell, Karma and rebirth and salvation. Marriage, Birth ceremonies, Funeral practices and ceremonies, Social life etc. have been knit together in the organic system of Meitei religion.

As with primitive and unsophisticated people everywhere the ancient religion of the Meities was full of magical and superstitious elements. But it has saints, Gurus and holy texts. The Meities developed metaphysical and ethical doctrines in a better way than others. Ancient religion of the Meities,

arose in Imphal valley and spread to Meitei inhabited places and the hills. Manipur Vaishnavism of later period will not grow without this previous background. At the same time, the present religion adopted many of the whole some features of ancient religion. I have developed this theme in my writings.

Conclusion

We can conclude the paper with the following observations. (1) A fine concept of life is discernible behind the superstitions. It is but reverence which sees the one God in all life, all activity and all matter.

2. All aspects of life are invariably associated with a religions fervour. All purposes are centred round worship. Music, dance, etc. have for their themes some aspect of divine sport/lila. Even Polo of which Manipur is famous as its motherland and items such as fishing and weaving are understood on the basis of religious beliefs.

3. Leaders, holy men and great men are honoured in this place. They are treated as *Langon*/manifestation of a great god. Our culture has really assigned a high place to them for their works.

4. Our people have a longing for a sound family life. Family life was considered sacred by the wide propogation of the concept of *Laiharaoba*, song, dance, material prosperity of the community, etc.

5. Manipur's universal religion is based on some ideas. The first is that there have been and there will be many incarnations/Shayons of God out of whom every one is free to choose without any imposition on others. The second is the existence on character, self-discipline, selfless service of the Lord in fellow beings, etc. The germs of ethical and moral virtues are found in abundance in our scriptures such as the *Sagok Lamlel*, Gurus advice to king Naothingkhong etc.

Notes and Reference

1. Dr. M. Kirti Singh, (ed) Khunglon (Ariba Mee tie laining Lambi), Imphal, 1994.
2. Dr. M. Kirti Singh, Religion and Culture of Mani pur, (ch.iv-v), Delhi, 1986.
3. It has been my purpose to conduct the discussion of Ancient Mitei. Religion with reference to the sacred lore of the people in my papers and talks.
4. I also rely on some articles written by living Metei Pandits. – M. Narn Singh, N. Ibochauba Singh, etc. in a journal called Umanglai Khandra 1930-94

6

CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS OF ANCIENT MANIPUR

Next to a stable system of a government, a country needs a number of institutions for organised expressions of the needs of the people. Ancient Manipur (33 A.D. to 1891 A.D.) is rich in the vocabulary of institution. There were several departments in the kingdom called the Loisangs or Services under the heads. They made it a general rule that no person except the king dared to establish the institution. Each office of the king was divided into four panas (Sub-Divisions) for sending a team of workers for the state. According to the Lalup system every male member of a house must join the service of the state as a labourer or soldier in a concerned institution for 10 days in every 40 days. *Khundin* is a part of *Lalup* which consists on seeing in the 7th or 9th days that a person liable to lalup is regular. It also operates in cases of illness where a substitute is provided in a joint meeting. The system governs the institutional order of the Meitei people-the relation of the king and his subjects and it achieved the integration of one with another service too.

With the advice of Scholars and the priests the king founded many institutions, some of which were, racial, some cultural, some religious, etc. Emergence of their number along with the founder kings can be drawn from the chronicle, the numerous Mss and from enquiries I have among the old and respectable pandits. They shape till this day the life, mind and even the patterns of the emotional responses of the people. Since in their policies the kings were guided by their purpose of perpetuating their rule. They took care to suppress the organised uprisings and unauthorised struggles for the throne (more numerous than anything). Circumstance that prevailed during this periods have convinced us that political and voluntary organisations were neither natural nor essential although the kings Ministers had to represent the different ideologies. With the development of various schools Vaisnavism in the 18th centuries, the number of institutions has significantly increased. The present paper includes the different kinds of institutions which survive the passage of time and add new ones to take the place of those which have been discard, destroyed by fire, Wars with Burme and the British.

1. Pre-Vaisnava religious Institutions (Pandit Loisang is the premier institution that grew out of the beliefs, practices and worship of the gods. The chief purpose is to compile the royal eronical in Meitei script under the authority of the king. It has a section for archives containing innumerable scriptures relating to the sacred lore of the people.

Another important function is to treat marriage from the point of view of ancestry. It includes the power to punish persons who marry within the same, Yek Salai, Sairup tenable (clans who are the progeny of the same grandmother or mother but of different fathers or grandfather), Putinaba (belonging to the same progeny). The pandit loisang is assisted by Lairkyengba loisang which is in charge of readings, writing, enumeration of old scriptures and copying them; Maiba Loisang incharge of scrutinising the Pibaship and the Laihareoba rites; Maibi loissang in charge of dance and divination and pana loisang incharge of Playing the pana for ceremonial and religious concern. The aspects of the last two, we may discuss later in connection with other institutions.

2. Brahamanic or Hindu Institutions– These institutions are, for the most part, the products of Ramandi and Gaudiya forms of Vaisnavite movements fostered by kings like Garibaniwaz and Jaisingh in the 18th Century. Visnu in the form of Sri Govindaji the grazer of cows is the highest deity for the Manipuri Vaisnavas and the Vaisnava kings profess to rule as his agents. The temple dedicated to him requires a highly developed organisation which maintains the sastric rites, rituals, customs and maners of the people.

The highest type of officials was the Brahma Sabha or a council of Brahman experts consisting of Guru Byavasthakari, Rajapurohit, Dhamandi guru, *Tantradhara* etc. (of nine jewels of king Vikramaditya). With high qualifications of Sanskrit, pertaining to *achara* and *prachara* their decision was approved by the king. No deviation from their decision was permitted not so much by a hairs' breath. Expiation and excommunication decreed by them were quite common in practice.

In course of time the number of functionaries became so great so much so that they had to be arranged into different groups in charge of different works connected with his service. It includes the following subservient institutions-Laikeirungba incharge of custody of Sri Govindaji and Hindu deities, Selungba incharge of checking all the offerings to God whether in cash or in kind and regular revenue of the temple and Laishang lakpa who looks into the affairs of the God.

Persons from among the Brahmans were appointed as pujaries for cooking and offering to Shri Govindaji, as Laichangba who is incharge of placing ornaments and ceremonial robes to the deity other sister institutions are, (i) Buhon Loisang (to provide water or get ready the torch((ii) Bhandari loisang (to provide fuels and to wash the pot); (iii) Kitana loisang (to prepare the ghee, to supply incense, and charcoal) (iv) Tanyeisang (to announce the hour of devotions and the measure actual timing), (v) Phiribi loisang (to work the clothes of the deities), (vi) Mandir sevak (flower service, and lakthong. reception services for checking the people whether they have separate thread and tulasi beads on the eve of their entry to the temple. The task of supply materials for the daily service of Sri Govindaji became confined to some areas of Manipur. Each concerned area has to

supplying sticks for the Varti (Candle stick) Camphor, cotton, fuels, wood, salt (local salt), milk and a large variety of fruits to the royal temple as a kind of spiritual obligation. This affiliation is temporal as well as spiritual. Every village is not without a temple and Brahman family which is a kind of the decentalised counterpart of the chief temples.

It deals with Hindu religious and cultural concerns of the village.

3. Cultural Institutions Under the above kings a large number of organisation-both pre-vaisnavie and vaisnavite nature have come into existence all the country. They are a major contribution to the artistic and cultural renaissance of cultures. Songs and dances are the chief media for the popularisation of Vaishnava message of Bhakti. We find many cultural institutions for cultivating and giving training Music, dance and dramas to the people. They were inspired by Vaishnava aesthetics. Noble kings such as Jaising, Chourajit, Marjit, Gambhirsingh and Chandrakirti alike founded institutions for Manipuri, Kathak Chitra Gosthalilas. We are also proud of the treaties written in Sanskrit, Bengali and archaic Manipuri on different branches of art composed by the ojhas who had the state duties. According to the time honoured custom, the Pala loisang initiated by king Joye Singh encourages, scrutinises new dance form movements, techniques ragas, themes, etc., in connection with the prayer service of Shri Govindaji. It is the highest cultural body which settles disputes in musical and cultural matters. The nata palas or singers fall into the following divisions-Ahal (Senior), Naha (Junior) Yaima (middle age), Sana (Royal) and sevak (diciple). The female has its own classifications which may bed scribed later. The pal loisang is required to send the participants to the following deities namely Ramji Prebhu, Mahaballi Hanuman Thakur, Kalika Devi, Advaita prabhu, and Kamakhya Devi for sava during the important festivals and days. The palas-male and female are obliged to contribute relevant songs suitable for each *arati* from the Vaishnava texts with the help of symbols and drums. The world famous Rash dance has been evolved and taught in the royal court by Pandits well versed in Synthetic culture of Manipur.

(ix) Industrial and economic institutions (Problems of human needsland, labour and capital lead to the establishment of State Departments along with their sub-divisions. Mines comprising iron, gold, salt, etc. were a concern for the king for which licence was granted by him to a particular group of family. It is incumbent upon every family to deal with a particular utility-service for the state and thereby reveals that the surname is. The Meitei Puranas provide enough information regarding officers for wood supplying, house building, carpentry, smithy and agricultural works all of which we had before the modern forms came into vogue. King Pakhangba (33-154 A.D.) by first historical king engaged himself in the establishment of Sinai Sangpuk for weaving and spinning service and Shinheiba sang (office for the professional experts) where the elderly people imparted knowledge to by pupils. The tradition has come

through Khuyoi Tompok (154-? A.D.) Ahaiba Loisang for bronze, brass and mint, king Loiyamba's Aehoiba sang for casual works, Thawanthabas' Thangja sang for blacksmith, king Ninththoukhomba (1432-1467 A.D.) founded Keirungba Yarekang and institution devoted to the work of storing foodgrains and paddy for the king and his staff. The Meteis had loisangs called Khuthiba (to super intend the works of skilled artisans), Tilli (to bring the schedule caste people for specialised works) Sang for villager's and Leikai Sangsaroi (to help in construction works (by about the 18-17 century. The Lourungba for collecting paddy, Thumjaorongba for collating salt Imung loisang (for working in the inner apartment of the harem), Yumjaoloi for constructing the Capital, Hei; hungbe (for repairing,) Sangaisemiba (for acquiring bamboo Timber, etc. are spoken of in the available Mss.

5. Educational institutions-Those institutions which help in the formation of human rights and personality are known as Educational Institutions. The Meitei held with the Hindus that joint family life and home was sacramental in character. Home and family life was considered to be the first centre for the worship of such deities as Sanabahi, Laimarel, Phunga or Hearth, etc. The parents initiated their songs to the secrets of learning.

Meitei culture has flowed from the forest of groves which is a kind of university for traditional dance, music, customs and manners. Education was for the most part informal. Guru's home as the natural school provides instruction to the pupils in matters of statecraft, religion and administration. King Naothingkhong is known to receive training from Mangang guru for many years at the latters' residence. Knowledge of expert gurus was anxiously sought for by kings and nobles. For the state the Institutions of physical or military education and defence works evolved out of necessity. Arambai (dart) Langsoi, (Spear), Polo, etc. received considerable attention by the male folk. The testimony to the high standard of this branch of learning is furnished by their invasion and conquest of the neighbouring countries.

To this category belongs not only the above offices but also the institutions of the following branches ameta (Physicians office to cure the paractures and injuries), Hidak sungba (preparation of medicine), Panji loisang (Astrology), Wariliba (Story telling) which played important parts in training the pupils in the traditional way. According to another mode of classification some institutions parfait the nature of both the economic and educational types. Spinning, weaving singing, embroidery, midwifery and fine arts of running a home were communicated to the girls by the elderly women in a place of a house known as Sinaipham in the afternoon or after sunset,. The story of king Joising and his daughter princess Sijsa lairibi seems to suggest the existence of educational institutions where royal family received their training in Vaisnava art and theology. (In the middle of the 19th century the British introduced modern schools in Manipur).

6. Recreationary institutions (This country has a long tradition in creative and cultural aspects which form a distinctive personality of its own. Groves, gardens, playgrounds, and Polo-grounds were in evidence as the records show. They were meant for amusements and recreation for the kings and princess. There were recreational institutions called Moibungkhongba (to blow the conch). Singakhongba (to blow the pipe), *pere* or bazai bangoon (to blow the blare of double curved copper horns), Asheiba or Pana Sang (minstrel) Hidakphanba (to prepare the pipe of tobacco and bring the huka), Hijangang (to keep the royal boat for race), Nagna or drum etc. The honour of founding such institutions goes to king Noophangaba (428-508 A.D.), king Khagemba, (17th Century) and King Neophangba (18th century). The office of conch playing is associated with such services as Govindas Arati, Travels of kings with Visnu, Harisang-kirtan (Fiddle) is a must for pre-Vaisnavite rites and Dance. It had a more varied use such as woking up the king early in the morning or following him in his tours behind the elephant. Practically in every village, we fear of temporary organisation composed of virgins who do the work of hearing the pena songs in the spring season.

It is significant to note the dance forms, lilas with folk songs, high class Dhob, nanoharsahi songs for entertaining the king nobles in this context. They are reminiscent of modern dramatic clubs and musical conferences of today.

7. Barbaric Institutions(According to Prof. J.S. Machanji Barbaric Institutions are those which are concerned with satisfaction of the animal impulses. The Meeteis evolved the panna institutions or divisions of the valley for the speedy management of the administrative affairs. (The word "Pana" is used to describe the Revenue division in the state, cf. Upper Burma Gazatteer part I). This system encourages Manipuri type of wrestling, foot hockey, polo, boat race and other form of human and animal fighting to entertain kings and nobles on festive occasions. At times, the competitions culminate in the loss of lives and group fighting among the participants. This system, dates from a period prior to the advent of Hinduism. It excluded from competition in it the Brahmans, as also the Lois or the conquered earlier inhabitants of the country. But the Muslims who came into Manipur at an early date during the reign of Khagemba are allowed.

Those were good reasons for associating primitive faith with the cult of animal and human sacrifice. The killing of them for strengthening and worshipping the deities was the dominant trend the these ages. *Churanthavas* or *Lallois* were employed in the offices and sent to find out human victims for sacrifices. Kangla which was the capital of ancient Manipur happened to be the centre of bloody sacrifice.

8. Female for eunuch institution (The chronicel tells us how king Pakhangba established paca loisang, a woman's organisation to try cases involving women in cases of adultery, rape, divorce, etc. It had its ideals in

having such institutions at such an early time when probably they did not exist in other parts of the world certain officers in the department called sunguba of each pana and some people "thanga lois had to work for the services of the Ranis. Such institutions of females as Maibi (priestess), Raseswari pala (composed of Jaising's descendants), Zalakaeli pala (composed of king "Nrsingh's descendants), Nupi pala-old and young-had, in course of time, shown special interest in developing music and dance all around.

Our difference from other cultures reaches its furthest limit in our discovery that king Sameirang (6th century AD) founded *phailda Loisang* (eunuch institution under the supervision of a head. The duty of the chief is to give relevant news to the queen, princess and other ladies of the royal court.

Aware of the importance of the weaker minority, and down trodden section of the people the kings have shown great anxiety for establishing institutions in order to protect them against exploitation and injustice.

9. Tribal Institutions(Tribal Institutions may range from those established by the king in the court to those established by the Hill people in their areas. Regarding the first one, we may point out that some of the early kings accepted Naga Princesses as their consort and adopted Naga boys as their sons. By the time of Irengba (984-1074 A.D.) there was an institution for hill boys called Haomacha to look after the welfare of the Tribals. The kings appointed expert Meetei or Hao Lambus as inter-preters for intensifying the Hill and plain contact. The tribal who learnt Manipur and was spokesman for his tribe was known as Meetei Lakbu whereas a Meetei with a good knowledge in tribal dialects was called Hao Lambu.

The Nagas who lived a little distance from the valley had a manner of village organisation similar to that the of Meeteis. It marks a synthesis of the Hills and plains.

10. Institutions for the scheduled casts (The Government was not idle to the affairs of the various conquered or degraded loi communities as it is known to us when several institutions were established for such castes as Kei, Ayokpa, Phunganai, Tengul, Yaithibi, Andro, Kameng, Chakpa, Sugnu, etc., The areas settled by them received provincial autonomy and this weakened the Government on account of their revolts and help to the invaders. Their institutions are run by some of the 34 nobles of the court and some of the professional loi people are attached to economy or industrial institutions. Loikhomsang founded by king Naophangba (428-508 A.D.) is a kind of establishment for collecting the booty from all conquered loi villages.

11. Muslim Institutions (The Muslims almost entirely composed of war captives and their descendants through Meetei women added an element in Manipur since the time of Khagemba in the 17th century. His reign records of the emergence of Institutions such as Pangan Sanglen, Pangal Phundrei (Institutions of Muslims specialising in lathe or turning a turner),

Mangalsang (to receive the people specially from the west). etc. both for the state their convenience. During the time of king Chandrakirti (1850-86 A.D.) we see a good attention being paid to the preservation of Islamic law and standard by creating the post of Nawab, Kazi among them.

12. Animal husbandry and cattle development institutions (The Manipuri kings are known to have constructed special rods and bridge for the movement of elephants and horses in connection with was and social occasions) as early as the 15th century A.D. Certain institutions were set up with an emphasis of proper breeding, feeding and management of cows horses, elephants, sheeps, pigs and of birds (hens, pigeons). The evolution of institutions for cattle and diary was associated with the important kings such as Kyamba Khagsmba, Garibniwas, and Chandrakirti. Mention can also be made of the physicians who are well versed in the pujas of the animals during calamities and epidemics.

Wangmanai is an institution whose membership was confined to the Sagolsem and Khumanthem surnames of the Meeteais. Its main activity centres round handing over the horses of their shed after proper treatment. The posts of the Chief for elephants and horses were occupied by senior princes known as Samuhanjaba and Sagolhanjaba. These institutions are fine examples of a combination of sentiment for cattle and their importance in various socio religious operations.

13. Governmental institutions-By this word, we may mean the more serious institutional matter in fields of administration, military system and diplomatic methods. Though the king was the supreme sovereign, he followed democratic procedures in all undertakings. The doctrine of sound legislative, Judiciary and executing wings has been flowing from the time of King Pakhangba and flowed on through his descendants in ancient Manipur a parliament of 64 Phamdous (members) and 34 nobles (council of ministers) were important factors in political life and for the purpose of this paper we will not be concerned with their names and functions. The highest court is called Cheirap and around its functions are clustered lower courts such as Wayel Katisang for provinces, Kuchu for villages and Top garod for Military purposes. Disputes of religious nature and of females are intirely divorced from their jurisdication. The Mss specify songs, namely (i) Cheiraksang meaning to beat the accused according to the nature of the crime, (ii) Keisumsang, to put the accused in chains, and (iii) Wayensang, to pass judgement.

The reign of Khagemba witnessed the use of institutions-Tengkhal for manufacturing muskets and cannons, Nongmeikappa for shooting, Dolai paba for police Department, Langmei dulairoi for carrying the litter, Samei thong the road for army, Top garod established by Garibaniwas was a military Institution responsible for the comfort of the king during his prayer tours. We also hear about the reigns and divisions of the navy, army and cavalry (lup, Tuli) and office of the Ayapural (Mnisiter incharge of Burma, etc. which were of great service to the state. The Institutions orgainasted by

king Gambhirsingh and developed by king Chandra-Kirti contained all these names and functions in the space of Military and diplomacy.

The Administrative complex is helped through a series of minor units, the important of which are Potsangba Sang Langmei (to report warned animaisnews), Lalloi Yareksang (to provide rest to the army), Ningthousenba Yareksang (for the halt of the body guards and followers of the King) and Oksang (receiving the king who returned after war or foreign visit.

14. Village Institutions(The principle of democratic Organisation is obvious if we consider the list of graded senior officials (Khullakpa, Luplakpa (Hanjaba in Loi villages) etc. in the hill and plain villages of Manipur. The main difference between the villages of Manipur and those of Indian centres round the functioning of such Institutions as Pakhanglakpa for the unmarried man, Naharakpa for ruling the lads who are still younger than full fledged (but unmarried men), Yupalkpa for managing the beer brewed from rice for the entertainment of strangers in the villages. Such Institutions provide scope for expressing the creative aspirations of the boys and girls.

Leirup, Keirup and Singlup, would seem to be pivoted to the structure of village organisations. Leirup is an Institution of villagers who do the work of digging wells, tanks, constructing the setting the right road and decorating the fields. Keirup or tiger club is meant for male villagers to do away with the difficulties of tigers, jackals and wild beasts. In the chronicles are references to these ferocious animals killing the people often. Villagers used to take part in chasing and killing them as soon as they made appearances in the villages through organised effort, of which they can be justly proud. It has rendered some significant service to the State in times of war and emergency. It continued till the beginning of the 20th Century.

Singlup or wood club is an Institution where members would contribute the necessary firewood for the cremation. Each member would watch the house by turn till the period of Shradha was over. It also worked exactly as anticipated in matters involving finance and co-operative efforts. It has struck deep roots in the mind of the Meitei people and is so appreciated as a form of democratic organisation by scholars and critics.

15. Some peculiar Meitei Institutions (In the realm of tantrism and rituals (primitive) are the ever increasing number of Institutions such as Usoisang for the King's pujah, Yoirẹngsang for the community worship, Yukon sang for offering food to the deities Hirusang for keeping Hi Yai (jewels), Sumsang for taming the enemies by incantations. But the wars with Burmanad the burning of MSS in the 18th Century have given a death blow to all such forms of cult and along with them went the said Institutions.

As a matter of interest, it may be pointed out that the Meiteis had the Institutions of cleanliness and decoration. The King or his family was given oiling with Sandlepaste, perfumed materials and warm water by the

specialist for hygienic habit. Thereafter he or his family was neatly dressed. That the modern practice of cleanliness was carefully observed is proved by such Institutions called Anam Sang founded by Charairongba and Nandeiba sang founded by Garibniwaz. In the time of King Kyamba (15th Century A.D.) was established *Pacha* for serving food and drinks to the peoples. Leima Senba Sang(An Institution for the luxury and decoration of the flowers of the ladies of the Royal family) that could be mentioned along with the above existed ones in this Kingdom.

The study of the Institution and evolution is of as much importance to our political history as to the history of Sociology and social philosophy. These were among the many cells that contributed to the beauty, vitality, external and internal organisations of the ancient Kingdom of Manipur.

Resources for some of these Institutions have come mainly through the patronage of Kings, individual offering, donation from the queens, princes, ministers and other larger bodies. Attempts were made for self-sufficiency of them. Money, as far as reasonably possible, was not used as a unit of transactions for them. Crops, plots of cultivable land (free of rent) and clothes were popular with them in the pre-British Manipur.

Notes and Refrences

1. This is the paper presented and disused at the Jaipur session of AIOC conference held from 29-10-82 to 31-10-82 in the history section. Its abstract is published in the printed summary of XXXI session of AIOC.
2. I have ditto and compiled a us called *shanglon* for publication. Sarhal Managing of my locality tool if from me for reading and never related it to me there is no hope of returning and publishing it.
3. Late Pandit M. Chandra singh of articles on the institution/shangs in a Manipuri Journal. I consulted if for comparison and reference.
4. Its clarification is my own.
5. Nothing shocked the Indologists of this place more than the failure of the young generation to have a study of this names and functions.

7

NATURAL RESOURCES OF MANIPUR IN THE PROGRESS OF THE NATION

Manipur is an isolated hill bound frontier state in the strategic north-eastern part of the Republic of India. In the past the state was on the whole prosperous. The people lived in its resources of their own agriculture, forest and minerals. It has been attested to by the observation of Sir James Johnstone. To quote him, "The forests of Manipur are plentifully supplied with fine timber trees; several varieties of oak and chesnut exist, and many others unknown in England such Woo-Ningthou, an excellent timber said to resist the ravages of white ants; wang, which can be worked in its green state as it never warps; teak, etc.——————————————————— Rhododendrons and wild azaleas of several kinds, as well as many species of brilliant orchids add greatly to the beauty of the forests, and in some parts tree firns are abudant. I know nothing more lovely in the world, than some of the forest scenery of Manipur with its solemn stillness."

Captain B.R. Pemberton made a similar statement-"From this sketch of the situation, extent, climate, and products of Munneepore, it will have been inferred, that with the exception of woollen clothing, the country itself furnishes every article that may be considered essential to the comfort and prosperity of its inhabitants;.....". These accounts indicate in a nutshell the general economic condition of ancient Manipur. The situation at present is in sharp contrast to what we have just read in their writings. The different resources-flora, fauna , etc. are in utter neglect although the state departmental news contain much reports regarding the proper utilisation of resources and potentialities. The papers contain nothing about our native flora and fauna and the by leaving much room for fuller investigations. The paper is an attempt to present as far as possible neglected resources and the heritage we acclaim.

In treating natural resources we have to deal with the following

Agriculture— It is the main vocation of the people of the hills and plain. When the rice culture of the Shan/Pong was well-known to all, there was no reason why it should not be true of the Meiteis. The land was fertile. An inch deep furrow gave a rich harvest. The people were familiar with 29 Kinds of paddy. We have the following produce-wheat, mustards, tobacco, pulses, potatoes, chilly, etc. For records mentioned such products as tea, betal leaves, cotton and all types of fruit. My field work shows the growing of betal nuts in Ziribam, Thanga and betal leaves in Kwatha loi village in Tengnoupal district. Mulbery plants were grown in large quantities in the scheduled caste villages of Imphal. White sugar can be manufactured from

the sugar cane growing in Thoubal, Utlou and Yaripok. The pity is that Manipur has become a deficit state in respect of these products. Modern programmes such as agricultural research, use of fertilizers, plant protection and mechanised methods double cropping, and co-operative Societies are tall talks which are not applied in Green Revolution Programmes of the above crops. **

Flora— Forests occupy an extensive area of 15,155 sqs.km out of its total area of 22,356 sq.km. Its botanical and forest wealth have prompted the British Zoologists, Botanists, etc. to come to Manipur in the beginning of the 18th century, A.D. The area by vegetation falls into three types/groups– (1) Bamboo forest, (2) Tree forest and (3) Grass Banks. 67% of the total area comprises forest area. More than 50% of the forests is under tree forests whereas, 22% under Bamboo. Every house or village contained well planted bamboos and trees. Manipur owed a good deal of its power, economy, literary inspiration to the Bamboo groves with which it abounds. The Bamboo plants supplied us with sticks, musical instruments, paya (twig of bamboo), wachet (split-Bamboo) and different types of house-building materials. There are such genera and species such as Khok, Saneibei, Utang Unal, etc. which served useful purposes. The part of plant which is eaten is Ushoe (tender shoots) usually protected by lightly fitted and overlapping husks (later Warukak). Excellent edible varieties such as Soijin, Soibum etc. can be prepared for Manipur style dishes. The leaves make good supplemental winter forage for livestock. The Mannipuries do not use the barks, juice, flowers and fruits of bamboos.

Timber trees such as Oak, teak, Agar are growing in Kabaw valley with their leafy branches which afford shelter of peculiar birds. They must have added to the wealth of the state.

The uncultivated parts of the valley and hills are full of forests. On the western side of Imphal river there is hill called Langol on which grew a celebrated cane used for polosticks. Uchan/Pine trees are growing luxuriantly at the foot of Sugnu hill. The story goes that the chief of Sugnu village presented a branch of pine tree as a present to Poireiton, the fabled coloniser of Manipur on their first meeting. Hence the name Uchan (pine), Medicinal plants, herbs with medicinal properties were employed and studied, 1000 of them being mentioned in medical lore and treatises. Many hymns and aneedlotes have been addressed to them and the places of their growth. Among them may be mentioned Leihou Amuba in Kwatha village, Pukhao and Churanchandpur hills, Ashi Khangla in the hills of Tengnoupal and Moreh side, Uri Angangba (Red Creeper) in Nongmaiching hill, Nongmangkha, Manahi Myrobalan, etc. These herbs or roots are used to suppress poisonous bite of dogs, snakes, etc. Observations made at the hills with the help of eminent physicians and elderly people revealed that the shady areas in the bushes help the proper establishment of these plants. Other medicinal trees are Uchithi, flower of Tabopi/creeper having long pepper, root of Gunjamali (a small herb), Mouri/hop, Saban Marinkha,

Puleimanbi (Alaichi), Komoi, Unapu, Kwamanbi, etc. which are grown in the hills of Manipur. Dalchini, Kabab/sweet bark has a high degree of acceptance because of its good taste and property and grow very well in Langol hill. A kind of bitter creeper which can resist soil grows best in the island of Thanga. A kind of creeper called Koknal grew with much ease in Manipur cachar road. It is raised on an extensive scale for use as washing soda. They are sold as green or dried ones, for use as curry, dish, medicine, colour producing flowers, herbs and fruits and plants the leave of which have the taste of salt and poison plants growing in the hills are too numerous to be described. The ancient people had an idea regarding ecological division, categories of plants such as acquatic, trial, amphibious. There have been concerted efforts by the local men, physicians and village scholars to promote the preservation of these plants, their identification and protection. Their use could contribute substantially to solving drug problems in Manipur.

Loktak lake was famous for its Heikak Yeli/water Singhara and rare species of acquatic plants (also fish) and avi-faunal population. Some of our lakes have meadow full of green reeds which delight the eye with their verdure. Urei/Orchid-Rare varieties of orchids are found in the hills specially in Ukhlrul and Khoupum valley. A tourist must be released into a vast garden of colourful orchids such as Khongamelei (Dendrobiam species), Yerumlei (with brown colour), highly praised in foreign countries. About 300 species have been centred by the forest Department of the state. Some of them are on the verge of extinction because of heavy exploitation by the tribals in the last 3 or 4, decades and apathetic attitude of the government.

Closely connected with the above is the world famous Siroi lily in Siroi hills of Ukhrul district. One can visualise the devastation of this rare lily on account of fire and uprooting by the visitors. The local Tangkhul Nagas calculate ages of the plants by the height and the number of flowers of it. The government has so far been slow in any matter regarding the declaration of Siroi hills as a National park. All are prone for obvious reasons to overemphasize the importance of out side flowers and plants, but not many of us dilate on our flower found in London or Newyork.

Fauna (The animals or fish inhabiting our rivers, lakes and forests beggared description. All kinds of native fishes were found in the rivers and lakes. There was a local demand for fish both dried and fresh. River fishing is concentrated between Sekmaijin and Chakpi Karong on the Imphal river. Native fishes such as Pengba, Ngakha, (small fishes) Ngashep (Macrones blukeri), Ngamu (Mudfish), Porom, Ngaton (Labeo bata) and Ngakra (clarias batra-chus),are out of the picture. It is regrettable that in our zeal for modern fishes we have neglected the most important fishes of our country.

Plenty were the pythons, crocodiles which sported in the rivers and lakes. Here also they became the victim of present ecological crisis.

Of the domestic animals kept here, cows, buffaloes, dogs, ponies, goats, sheep, and cats are important in a Hindu Manipuri house. It was the practice of the scheduled caste and tribal people to rear pigs, fowls, hen etc. From these animals, products like milk, eggs, meat, hides etc. are obtained. Manipuri cows, bulls and horses are prized now a days. The land is very poor in their population. We need a law protecting them from extinction. Manipuri forests abound with wild elephants, dogs, tigers, Mithun Leopards, deer, wild boars, wild pigs, wild cats, monkeys, jackals. Sangai/Brow-antlered deer tops the list of rare species of animals. This deer is peculiar to Manipur only. It is receiving protection of the forest Department in its natural home in Keibul Lamjao National Park. Nok, a kind of animal which is larger then the cat was normally found in Shikhong. Its oil is most useful in curing Laithung (incurable disease) .

Researchers reveal a clear evidence of migratory birds, varieties of peasants, five species of partridges, five different varieties of Hornbills and quail. Migratory ducks, Fantail and Pintail, common coot are common visitors in Manipur and Lake Loktak. Among the hill birds various species of pigeons are found here.

Minerals (Our local lore and mss tend to show the richness and prosperity of precious metals such as gold, silver, iron and limestone. Iron was perhaps in plenty for the people had developed the practice of manufacturing axes, dagger, hoes, plough shares, which formed the inseparable companion of the Manipuries. Burmese and the shans. Iron ore was found from the beds of small streams, south of Thoubal, the hills near Langathel and Kakching village. The art of discovering and using Iron has become a thing of the past. Gold has been shown to exist in the streams of Kongba Meirongba. Nungjing, hills of karang, capital of Kangla and streams which flow from the bed of Chakpi river near Burma side. The unmelted gold and silver ore from these areas were used as an invariable material at the time of the coronation of the Maharaja. There were mines of copper in sibong, white stone in Khoupum Dolan hill, of precious jewels and fire producing stone in Tamenglong, Monbi and chasat. A good quantity of stone is obtained from Thongjaorok and Vishnupur area. A star like lump can be extracted from a kind of stone called Nungphop. It did the function of soap. The localities of time are Sokpao, Sugnu, Kakching, Keithelmanbi. Manipur is particularly rich in mineral of salt, the principal springs of which are found in Sikhong, Ningel, Chalou, Waikhong, Bengi, Pechi, Sajikhong and Chandrakhong . My diligent field work induced me to think that it is found in Kwatha hills of Tengnoupal district. Most of the Khongs/salt wells ceased to function for want of repair and encouragement. The salt wells much to our regret are filled up and levelled beyond recognition. During the British regime and after the merger of Manipur with India in 1949 salts of the country were abandoned in favour of imported salts except in religious festivals. In the past the state and the

public did have an emotional and sentimental attachment with the salt wells.

On the whole, mineral resources remain unexplored and uncared. They contributed nothing to the economic and commercial side of the state.

Conclusion

I now like to conclude the paper with the following observations and suggestions.

1. The ecological crisis can be solved by a massive programme of afforestation and use of its resources. Nothing is more destructive than destruction of forests during world II and after, for cultivation and habitation. The forest policy in respect of big trees and medicinal plants have been discouraging so far.

2. The introduction of herbals medicine, mineral value available in the form of minerals and animal world will revolutionise the entire field of medical world by bringing untold benefits to millions of ailing people. It is proved that they are useful antidotes against poisons and insect stings.

Unfortunately our people are attracted more to modern methods and names than research in our resources. The young people hardly know about the look of a plant, tree, grass or the fruit of flower and their properties. To-day a correct identification of them is being felt by men of science of technology. This is all the more pressing in the field of botanical and medical research. The method of correct identification is from the villagers, physicians and scholars. I feel that an active and enterprising ministers secretaries and directors can restore the green glory of our plants, herbs and turn it into resourceful forest within a few years under a special scheme.

3. It must be the policy of the Government to depute researchers to go to the hills for gathering knowledge about the medicinal trees/plants. The knowledge must be tabulated and the information must be forwarded to the research cell. The Municipality or Panchayat must be under obligation to provide plots of land for growing them. It is learnt that an Israeli Dortor has succeeded in identifying and tabulating nearly four lakhs of local herbs from a small dry arid area like Israel at a time when it had not fully developed.

I contend why our Government fails to undertake to do what a single man did by himself. The country had a rich tradition in this field. The only difficulty is that our officers are not trained in our line and used to go in for costly methods, external products etc. Indeed they are beyond poor men's reach. The greatest transformation for the cause of resources can be ascribed to the transformation in the minds of the people about their value.

4. Every year floods affected the people of the valley. The loss of property in terms of crops, money and land may run to crores of rupees. The irrigation and flood control Department cannot combat this evil or the menacing problem. It might be suggested that dredging of small revulets and streams may be a better solution. Along with it programme of rearing

forests and planting of trees, bamboos on the bank of large rivers may be undertaken. Diversion of small rivers towards dry areas and construction of river band and outlets may be an effective solution.

5. The British regime and neglect of our people accelerated the process of decay of our mineral resources salt mines. The younger generation will not be in a position to identify the places where there were salt springs, deposits of Iron, copper, etc. The Industrial policy of the Government has to reckon with this issue. Protection of native fishes, animals and mineral resources are urged, as this will solve some problems. They must be protected by local sentiments as well as by proper legislation. Co-ordinated actions of all state Departments are required to protect and exploit them.

6. Geological information, regarding our rocks, exploration of coal, oil, etc. in our hill areas has been furnished by scholars, scientists and observers. Newspaper reports are not sufficient for actual exploration. There was no place for Manipur in the published geological maps of India. Neither centre nor the state Government initiates the exploitation and assessment of Manipur's minerals with support of the geological survey of India in a proper way. She is lagging for behind the competition of other states in respect of industrial development. If one-fourth the amount of money that is being spent on other purposes (in election) is spent on geological survey, it will get a chance for proper development and the world will come to know its advantage.

7. There are some unreached hill tracts and jungles without human habitation. The Barak exploratory expedition of the Assam Rifles (1985), expedition Manipur Mountaineering Association 1985, cultural tours of private organisations will increase peoples awareness of the resources. Their reports must be communicative to us so that all of us must not be far away from our treasure.

8. The primary duty of the state should have been to see that our natural resources were made widely known and that our people were made to understand their importance. Now the sitluation has been the reverse at an alarming degree. This is due to the fact that they are not concerned with the past or with the crude methods. But great scientists have paid tributes to our flora and fauna which we ourselves seem to care so little these days. But the chances for the restoration and proper utilisation of our resources are not less hopeful if all of us work seriously in this direction. The expenditure involved in such a venture must be below the national gain. This is a challenge and I hope that be Government and the resourceful scientists and the businessmen/contractor, jointly or separately will be able to rise to the occasion.

Notes and Refrences

1. The reprinted books of late P. Parjat Singh, viz Manipur Sahitya, Manipur Itibrita and Manipur it has (1985-90) may be consulted for too this purpose

2. Field work conducted by the author by visiting the important places of Manipur valley during 1989-95.
3. This is the paper presented by the author in the seminar of Earth Science, Dept, Manipur university in 1988. New points emerged from the interactions in the Seminar.
4. The position with regard to the preservation of native flora and fsuna continues to be for from satisfactory, in spite of many slogans and protests.

8

SMRITI CUM HINDU LAWS IN MANIPUR (1800-1960 A.D.)

The Meities of Manipur (most Advanced Community of this part of India), were guided by their customary laws existing from ancient times and which from a separate school in a sense. The most important and earliest text on Meitei customary law that has survived is the *Loiyumba Silen* composed in Meitei script by the court pandits under the order of king Loiyumba (1074-1122,A.D.),.It deals with such topics as codes of conduct for the kings, queens, nobles and the commoners, division of labour, specific occupations for every family and Labup system (10 days' compulsory labour by the males to the state within 40 days)

Progress of codes of Smriti

The Manipuries embraced Hinduism in the form of Bengal Vaishnovisum by order of Maharaja Bhaigyachandra (1759-1798 A.D.),. The long and prosperous reign of Maharaja Chandrakirti Singh (1850-86), was responsible for the Sanskritisation and synthesing Meitie customary laws with the Hindus codes. It is known that we owe this to the Brahman Pandits who brought with the message of Hindu culture and legal system during the 18th, and 19th, centuries. No wonder that the Pandit Loisang (Royal institution of specialist in ancient custom and lore),became the best and the most ardent interpreter of Meitiei customary laws which comprise social, civil, criminal and constitutional matters. There was also a Brahman Sabha for upholding questions regarding Hindu codes, beliefs and practices with the approval of the ruler. The Brahman Sabha was constituted by king Bhaigya Chandra with the Brahman specialists in the field of Nyaya, Jurisprudence, Jyotis and theology. Beginning about this time, successive inroads were made into the practical application, of Smriti in the life of the Manipuris. Development of Hinduism syncronized with the autocratic and reactionary methods of the Brahman Sabha in interpreting and commenting Hindu practices. In the beginning of the 20th, Century we notice an increase of the titles, posts and duties of the Brahmans in the Sabha. The head of this institution is called *byavasthakari* who happens to be a Brahman of good descent, integrity & learning. We shall have the occasion to note a few further remarks in the style and functioning of title holders of the Sabha in proper places.

We may notice some developments of these years concerning the smriti culture. The sons of well-to-do Brahmans were seriously engaged in activities leading to the taking of titles and publications of books on smriti. The first Brahman who formally took a degree from a recognised tol is Ramnarayan Sharma. He was followed by Scholars who became too Bersile

in other branches of Sanskrit studies. The Maharajas were able to take all possible steps which made it possible to provide their education at state expenses and to bring out the works in Manipur.

Manipuri version of Smriti Jurispradence Smriti codes were not unknown to the Meities even before the royal proclamation of Maharaja Jaising. The astrologers of the 17th, century had ideas of eclipse, fasting pollution, etc. In the rigen of Maharaja Jaising appeared the well-known local text: Byavastharnave. The Court Pandits consulted *Vedas, Puranas, Bhagvat, Bhakti, Rasmrita sindhu* and smriti works of Bengal. Local practices, conscience of the people and modifications, are given due place in this work. It is valuable for a comparative study of Smriti Codes and Meitei customary laws and their interactions. The social divions, *ekadasi, Malamasa*, period of unchanliness as recorded in this compilation and approved by the rulers from time to time have been current as the last word in Manipur. The salient feature is that the smriti of Raghumandan is the sources law for the Manipuries. Here also prevails the smritis of Goudiya Vaishnavism written by Gopal Bhatta those Haribhakti Vilas is supreme in religion. Both Vaishnava and Samrta practices have impression on the Manipuries in several aspects. The Smriti of Raghunandan is followed in such cases as Upanayana (taking Sacred thread from the King/ the Brahman Diksha guru or the father) and marriage. It observes Ekadasi, Mahadwadasi, etc. in a vaishnave mould. To the Manipuri Hindus the notion of Dharma as given in the Bhagvat (natural flow of devotion to God), has a great appeal. The Manipuris of the 18th, and 19th centuries were hesitant of following Vedic injunctions, any cardinal virtues and self-knowledge through Yoga unless they are tested by Bhakti.

The Manipuri codes deviated from Bengal since they did not observe the ceremonial uncleanness for 3 days in connection with the birth of a female child. When it grew and developed, it does not discard the method of anging from a house to another according to Vishnusmriti, of 5 yajanas of *Yajna Valkya* smriti (as also Navagraha worship conducted by competent/priests and astrologer).[1] By order of the Maharajas it teaches the auspicious and inauspicious stars and timings according to its own method. The code solemnly laid it down that the impurity concerning death is more serious than that of birth. Unlike other parts of India, dogs, pigs, etc., are declared to be unclean. Any meeting with the insane people, Muslim, Hao (Tribal), and Yaithibi (untouchable), was outside the Panka of Manipuri Vaishnava. Use of unwashed cloth, taking food without bath, use of pipe water and soap, leather, going to the modern Bazars, Halls and Schools. etc. are highly condemned by the orthodox Hindus. Under Hindu law the parental relationship includes the Seventh degrees on the fathers side/whereas the maternal relationship covers the fifth degrees. The rulers of Manipur made it a point to restrict the parentage lineage to the 4th, degree on both sides.[2] The Geography of Vyavastharnava covers the valley of Manipur inhabited by Meities of 4 castes, later it is extended upto the

Ningthi (Chindwin river in Burma Myonmar) and refers to the Meiteis living outside the boundary of present Manipur. The rulers were faced with the problem or their time which had an expansive social and religious outlook.[3]

I propose to indulge in a comparative study of Manipuri codes with some Hindu Smritis, some sections of modern laws and of the parliament.

1. Caste System Under Hindu influence they adopted varna system along with social evils. It can be pointed out that they accepted their own definition of caste in a loose way. Meetei Society consists of Maharaja Kumars, Rajkumars, Bamonas (Brahmans coming from the rest of India), Kshatriyas from the yek/salais (sibs), Lois/ Scheduled Caste and the Yaithibis. The royal family and the Brahmans formed the higher starata. For the same offence they were given light punishment. Ways are made for them in legal and customary advantage. Their legal status weakened by the British System and modern secularism is sought to be strengthened and restored by them nowadays. The economic and industrial section is represented by the different Loi Communities who can be elevated to Kshatriya Cast after a purificatory ceremony. The Yaithibis which comprised the untouchable group were bad enough till the social barrier was abolished by Congress movement under Gandhism in the forties. Birth, virtue and action formed the deciding factors in approving the gradations of superiority and inferiority in all these communities.

2. The Ashram System of Smriti can be applied to the Meiteis. As in Hindu texts here also we find the importance of a householder. The distinction between the Vanaprastha and Sanyasin is not clearly brought out in this society. The Sannayasis, are, in their opinion, Jivanmuktas who go from door to door with sticks, begging bowls and yellow robes. The mendicants are entitled to receive the hospitability of the rulers, nobles and every householder.

If caste system handicapped social evolution of Manipur, the division of life was arrangement for getting the maximum meaning out of life in the light of physiology of the stages of growth.

(iii) Samaskaras/Rites de-passages

Most of the meitei rites and festivals are considerably influenced by Hindu Smritis although they retain local elements which had pre-Hindu origin. Birth rituals consist of ceremonial worship of household deities with local materials under the guidance of maiba (priest) and priestess. It is obligatory for every people to observe special non-Hindu ceremonies in case of death of a child below three years or of a mother in childbirth.[3a] But *Swasthi Puja* and rite of cleaning the house follow the Hindu pattern set by Brahman experts.

Upanayan is considered as pertaining primarily to *Lugun Thangba* (taking of sacred thread) and Lamming Louba. Taking the name of the God). As a general rule it is the male who is to take sacred thread from a Brahman Diksha guru. The latter is common to both sexes. Both males and

females under 16 years of age are invested with *Kanthi* (garland of tulasi beads) by the guru to the accompaniment of Harinama and the history of the sects of Vaishnavism. The Bamon boys normally take the sacred thread at a very tender age. The thread of a Brahman has nine strands, while that of a Manipuri consists of six strands only. What is of peculiar interest to us is that the ages of majority for religious purpose, the powers and rights of a person can be attributed to anyone as soon as he/she receives Laiming Louba. The investment of sacred/Upanayon *Samaskar* is not regarded as fit to exercise the religious rights and liabilities. The pre-Hindu as well as the Hindu codes as adopted in Manipur lays down that the Maharaja, Rajkumar, the Brahman priest or the specialist in the country's lore or a guardian can perform the ceremony of Laiming Louba.[4]

Marraige

Marriage is a necessity in one's advance to the realisation of God Like the Manu'scode the Meiteis insist on the valid form of marriage being the only Samaskara to be performed once during the life time of a woman. The Manipuries are opposed to child marriage, purdah system, impositions of restrictions on women. They recognise eight forms of Hindu marriage. It is determined by their notion of common ancestory such as *Yek Tinaba* (some clan/gotra in a sense), Putinaba (belonging to the some origin having the same forefather),Sairuk Tinaba (persons descending from the persons of same mothers but of different fathers), and Hidakphu phida Tinaba (concept of common hooka and interdinning). Chenba (elopement by mutual consent) and Gandarava form are very popular. The importance attached to dowry, betrothal and finalisation in a customary way before marriage, exchange of pan between the bride and the bridegroom, divination from setting fish free, offering of sweets prepared from black mustard after sapta Pradakshina (the bride walks seven times round the groom with flowers), chiruk Nungsang Kaiba (to open a basket containing rice in the morning of the fifth day of marriage) and *Lubak chengbon kaiba* (opening the basket and box and fold the women's garment in the ordinary way), *chakauba* (entertaining the bride and groom by the family of the bride are unique in Manipuri codes. Offering of fruits, vegetables and local made sweets to the household deities and presiding deities of the villages form an important customary item for them.

Like the codes of Manu the relation in marriage is that of cultural and vocational equality. Better the progeny is rule in both sides. According to Meitei Law the issue of a Brahman or a Rajkumar on a wife of common caste (Kshatriya or vaishepa) belongs to the varna of the father. This is however not the case with the codes of Manu. The Manipuris of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century are very particular about marriage within the socially approved groups, purity of blood among the parties. But we had many instances of intermarriage between the Meiteis and the tribals before the coming of Hinduism. The resolution of Nikhil

Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha in its second session in 1936 specifically forbids the marriage of a Brahman with a Kshatriya girl.[5]

Manu is opposed to bride price. But the Meities and the tribals are not ignorant of the importance attached to woman in the form of bride price. The idea of giving a girl without receiving anything from the bridegroom is countenanced in Manipur also.

Funeral and other connected practices During these periods methods of disposal of the dead and obsequial ceremonies have been Hindunised and are mainly in the hands of Hindu Brahmans. We have been Hindunised and are mainly in the hands of Hindu Brahmans. We have noted earlier that the maibas (priests of the pre-Vaishnavite culture) play an extensive role in cases of untimely death of some persons, death of babies under 3 years of age, death in abnormal ways. There is still to-day the belief in customary laws concerning the death of the titleholders of the king or dignified people. For Brahmans the shraddha takes on the 11th, for Kshatriyas on the 13th. The task consists of recital of *Bhagavatam* by a Brahman priest, performance of Kirtan, dietary restrictions of the family till the purification ceremony takes place.

There are serious instances on record where the Brahmans refused to conduct the funeral rites and prayers of certain people (declared excommunicated by the Sabha for not paying the purification fes) under the direction of the reactionary Brahma Sabha during the great scandal of 1939. The excommunicated could get back their position if they paid a big amount in purification. It leads to the great upheaval of Manipuri Society under the leadership of Late H. Irabot Singh. Such was the liberty enjoyed by the Brahmans during the time of Maharaja Churachand Singh.

Hindu Smrities were encouraged by Maharaja Churachand and his elder brother Raja Drumbar Singh Senapati, the then member of judiciary of Manipur State Darbar. There were assemblies of learned Brahmans to advise the Senapati in Hindu customs. Text on Hindu laws of different parts of India were identified. The Maharaja and his eldest brother deputed pandit Atombapu Sarma and L. Ibungohal Singh to Bombay in 1929 at the expense of the State to procure a copy of *Chatuvarga Chintamani* by Hemagiri.[6]

King and State

In Smriti as well as in Meitei customary law the king is a divine power on earth. It places an ideal before him that he is a trustee of Lord Pakhangba or Govindaji for the protection of his subjects. The word of the sacred *Puyas* or *shastras* and divination of the deities impose restrictions on a ruler. The administrative machinery brings in a series of officer in order of rank. In War, diplomacy and policy making matters the kings and ministers used to quote the Smriti and sacred shastras to support their decisions?

Laws-Civil

There Meiteis are governed by the Dayabhag School in matters of inheritance and partition. Dattak form of adoption is recognised and implemented among them. A tribal or an only son or female can be adopted provided the formality is done with the feeding of the members of the clan with Homa. Daughters come in the category of heirs and can inherit if there are no sons; her place comes after brother's son's. No distinction is made between and ancestral and self acquired property.

Nupi Mahal– As per usage, a woman is liable to pay to the husband Rs.50/-as charge for forsaking her husband irrespective of the fact whether she remarries or not. However this is not payable when divorce is done by mutual consent. Her husband must claim it within a period of 3 years after *Khainaba* (divorce in a loose sense). It is not applicable to the Brahmans of Manipur.

Khainaba– Divorce is done on a slight pretext without any material condition. The woman after Khainaba continues to belong to the yek/gotra of her husband until she become the concubine of another man. If the wife is pregnant at the time of divorce she is entitled to get 12 pots of paddy plus some rupees called *Angang chakthak* (maintenance charges for the period during which she is unable to work).

Position of women– As in Hindu Smriti we find that the mother exceeds the father in the right to reverence. Some practices prohibit women's participation in certain works such as the use of rebuts dance movement, use of *Kartal, pung* (Manipur) drum, conducting arati and seva of Hindu deities performed publicly and also the study of shastras. But Manipuri codes in its pre-Hindu and Hinu aspects stand up for women's association with martial arts, horse riding, participation in medical works and separate court for them. Women are not inferior to men in legal rights, social values and personal qualities according to its practice. The view of the wife being the property of the husband and therefore fit for sale as described by the British writers is not applicable to them.

Most civil and social disputes were dealt with by village Panchayats (of caste, profession and customs). The ultimate sanction was the ruling authority who decides every issue in accordance with the prevailing custom although contrary to or at variance with the laws of Smriti and allied texts. Legislation by the State concerning the legal issues was considered as an unnecessary intrusion in these centuries. In the warmth of the next called the family virtue grows like the pearl in any oyster.

Impurity, purification penance, Curse, etc.

The ideas of *Himsa, Ahimsa*, sin, crime, impurity, purification and penance are clearly reflected in Manipuri mind. They are modified on grounds of practical ideology. Violation of customary and shastric laws are called *Apradha* or *dosha*. Penty prescribed for the same was excommunication and degradation to a Loi/Scheduled Caste status. A well

developed expression of sensitivity to pollution and the desire to get rid of it has been widely current. *Prayshcitta* for a light offence would be sufficient to cleanse them of the impurity imposed by eating the food of an unclean caste, common eating with the Manipuris in Burma, killing animals, tantric practitioners, etc. The function of expiation ceremony is conducted by an assembly of learned Brahmans well-versed in Dharma shastras. In the forties of this century healthy disputes arise among the learned Brahmans scholars over the issue of mangba sengba (pollution and purification). In serious case the Maharaja should preside. Courage for speaking the truth and the recital the name of God are often spoken of as having expiatory value. Instances are on the record of our chronicle (*Cheitharol Kumbaba*) where the Kings, nobles and the common people used to perform the expiation ceremony during the seven years' devastation (1819-1826) and during the great world wars. The titual of pilgrimage to charidham (Nabadwip, Vrindavan, Puri, Dwarka) and dwelling in small huts subsisting on alms, etc. were often resorted to by them.[8] Curse and blessing by kings and Brahmans are supposed to be effective instruments for any happening. We have tales; legends and books for this belief.

Criminals Laws– The legal experts never fail to uphold the ideal of glorifying the concept of a good society. The nobles go in details in crimals cases and punishments. They give more importance to evidences and ordeals from the point of view of finding out truth. Cases of theft, murder, adultery, attempt for the throne, gambling, etc. were defined and dealth with seriously according to its own law. Females were never put to death; they were punished with exposure in the Bazar. *Brahmanatya* (killing of a Brahman) tops the list of major sin by the time of Maharajah Joi Singh, the great social and religious reformer of Manipur. He abdicated the thorne in favour of his eldest son as his officials killed a Brahman criminal called Kokpei (who killed his own wife) without his order. On getting the news the King exclaimed "In my time a Brahman was killed; I shall die by walking in the holy places." He at once handed over the charge to his son and went on pilgrimage to Nabadwip and Vrindaban. Such was the belief in those days.

The rulers are governed more by the idea of keeping the dignity, morality and power of upper classes (Princes, Brahmans etc.) to assure prestige of the Government under a monarch, to assume due rights to man and woman with regard to marital relations, maintenance and so on. The concept is somewhat opposed to modern law about absolute equality of all in the eye of law, and equal punishment for all, irrespective of caste and status. It is to be noted that the idealism of the past along with their sacredness gradually disappeared from the modern man who came nearer to modern law courts after the merger of Manipur with India in 1949.

Cow Killing– Instances are on the official records and authoritative chronicle that the Vaishnava communities of Manipur challenged the slaughter of cows by Dr R. Brown the political Agent for eating self in his

period. Cow killing was punishable with fine under the criminal law of Manipur. After 1891 A.D. the issue came up for serious deliberation at high levels. Maharaja Churachand informed the political Agent and the president of Manipur Darbar that cow killing is against Manipuri custom and if any one was seen killing a cow in his state he should be persecuted. The then Darban on 14-10-36 resolved to forbid it in the State and the president of the Darbar was requested to apply the same among the hill tribes. The British officer (President) regrets that such a prohibition conflicts with the custom of the tribes and the legislation would be a serious interference. The Chief Commissioner of Assam and the Political Agent of Manipur did not approve the Maharaja's proposal. It is also learnt that the Japanses army tried to slaughter cows in some parts of Burma during the Second World War. On getting the report from the Manipuri inhabitants the Manipuri I.N.A. soldiers did not allow it to be committed. Again, the military personnel of allied forces in Manipur ungratefully killed cattle for eating. Maharaja Bodhachandra offered stiff resistance to the British authority on grounds of religious sentiments as also on higher human sentiments by quoting the Hindu scriptures. The British officers could not dare up to continue it and were duty bound to respect the orthodoxy of the Manipuris.

The Maharaja made a proclamation to this effect on August 28,1947. The Vaishnava community honoured him and her highness Iswari Devi with the title of *Dharma palak, Gopalak* and *Praja Ranjan.* It is a great tragedy that this purity is not kept up by the people and the rulers nowadays and its feature is lost through numerous changes in law, administration and religion in modern times.

Conclusion

When the laws of Smriti became the norm the Aryabarta consciousness spread in Manipur since 1804. The Manipuri Hindus began to think that the Scheduled Caste (Lois) and the tribals had no place in Manipuri Society. By the times of the two world wars impact of Smriti became so wide-spread and penetrating that customs and rituals of the Hindus became deep-rooted in the life of the Manipuri Hindus that the British and the Maharajah adopted means to glorify the Brahman pandits. Everything good in the kingdom was declared to be the blessings of wise Brahmans and all calamities and misfortunes ascribed to their ires.

The error in applying Smriti texts by some reactionary Brahmans led to a series of anti-Hindu and pro-revivalist movements among the Meities of Manipuri valley and of Cachar (in Assam). Converts into Muslim and Christian religion have been a feature in an increasing number in the middle of the 20th century. The perverted interpretation of Hindu jurisprudence encouraging reactionary methods and fantastic ideas of cleanliness and pollution have led to the mass conversion of the hill people (29 tribes supposed to be of inferior stock) into Christianity by the powerful missionaries who took full advantage of the situation.[9] As equal to the

same, we have to-day, the greatest number of Christian population in North-eastern India including the hills of Manipur.

It must, however, be noted that the Smriti codes enriched the Manipuri way of life and saved the integration of Manipur with India socially and culturally. The holy texts of Hindus on Smriti could no longer be sealed to the cultured people of Manipur.[10]

Manipur was governed by her own laws. No British Indian law were adopted by the Government of British India, nor were they extended to Manipur during their regime. But in 1960 all the central acts except Cr.P.C. and T.P. Act were extended. The customs as codified by the committee under the chairmanship of Thakur Lakshmi Narain, B.A.,B.L. Judicial Commissioner in 1960 was based upon deliberations among legal experts. One Bhagavat Acharya (Brahman), Pandit Achouba (Head Pandit of the Loisang) and one Muslim intellectual along with modern legal elites were in the Committee. Their options were collected, compared and authenticated by the holy texts. The same is published by the Govt. of Manipur in 1960.

Notes and References

1. I acknowledge my debt to B. Ibomcha Sharma, Brahmapur, Imphal, and Radhamohan Sharma, Tarkatirtha, Sagolband, who supplied me with this information. The first law College Magazine was edited by me in 1965. The issue contains scholarly articles on Manu.
2. I reproduce here and in the following some regional variations from the ms "*Vyavastharnaya*" "It is in the possession of B. Ibomcha Sharma. Also my paper on the "Brahmans of Manipur" published in pp.5-15 of *Matamgi Khongthang*, 35th issue, 1981.
3. Dr. M. Kirti Singh, Manipur Samaj Haugatlakpa amasung Chaokhatlakpa, Imphal, 1977, pp. 1-6.
4. Panditraj Atombapu Sharma, *Pakhangba*, Imphal, 1952 pp. 165-166.
5. S.Yaima Singh and R.K. Maipaksana Singh (ed.), *Nikhil Hindu Manipuri* Mahasabha, Imphal 1983pp. 122-123, (Proceedings of the papers of the Sabha, 1934-46).
6. Atombapu sarma Vidya Ratna, Manipur Itihas, 1942, Bhumika, pp.1-2, L. Ibungohal Singh, Jivan Charit, Imphal, 1975,pp97-98.
7. Manipur was annexed to British India after the Anglo-Manipuri war of 1891. The rulers and warriors of Manipur were thoroughly conversant with the verses of Smriti. Vijay Panchali, Vol. V translated by L. Mangi Singh and L . Mani Singh (Section on the Khongjom War, 1891) may be consulted for this purpose.
8. Vide my paper "Funeral Practices of the Meiteis" presented at the 72nd Session of Indian Science Congress Association, Lucknow, 1985. It is

published in Anthropological Perspective edited by Dr. K.L. Bhowmik, Sectional President of Anthropology.

9. For details vide my paper "The coming of Christianity in the hills and plains of Manipur" presented and discussed at the History Section of Session of All India Oriental Conference held at Ahmadabad from November 6-8, 1985.
10. The well-known, works in Manipuri are (1) Achousha Pradip by Gokul Shastry, 1946, (2) *Hari Bhakti Vilaskana* by Vyavasthakri Prikshit Sharma, Vidyabhusana, 1960 (Ekadasi Vrata Portion), (5) *Nitya Karma Padhati* by L Bapu Sarma, 1937, (6) Yumseng Yummang by Atom bapu Vidya Ratna, (7) Samaskar Padhati by Ram Narayan Sharma, Smriti Bhushan and (8) Vaishnavakarmakal Padhati by Gokul Shastri, 1980.

9

Problem of Meitei Script-an Appraisal

An interesting aspect of Manipuri culture was about its script. There are 29 hill tribes in Manipur in addition to the Meiteis, Loi/Scheduled Caste groups and the Vishnupriyas. The Meiteis are the only group which used a script for writing the sacred books, inscriptions on metal plates, stones, coins, etc. belonging to the early times. The culture of the Meiteis was not tribal, art developed. The development of society under the able kings brought to existence a large number of cultural traits as historical necessities. The script is a token of their social excellence, ethnic and linguistic identity although they were not isolated people. The people felt the urge to produce a script by improving the primitive pictographic model, totems, etc.

The Court pandits (Scholars of royal institute) claim to monopolise the use of this script, but we find it difficult to accept their claim. The script which has attained maturity before 1891 (British rule) developed 2 distinct modes, e.g. higher style and lower style. The former centred round the royal Loishang (Institution) and was connected with the official works, administration. It was used by the royal scholars and physicians with the approval of the Kings. This style became wide by used in Imphal valley among the cultured circles. The lower style was used by the Lois/Scheduled Caste communities of the adjoining country side areas in reducing to writing their lores incantations and rituals. It has been practised by them in an unofficial way. However it must be noted that many manuscripts on different themes with calligraphy of a distinctive charm have been found written in both styles. There is no fundamental and substantial difference in the character of the script between them. The Brahmans and the Mayangs (People from the rest of India) who had became a part of Meitei community, too wrote in this script, specially before the Anglo-Manipuri war of 1891 when Manipur's own culture was valued. By far the greater part of Medieval Manipuri literature such as Epics, Hindu Puranas, astrology, etc. was written by this class in Meitei script.[2] In fact, new letters came to be inserted in this period so as to preserve a more accurate pronunciation of Sanskrit words, tunes, etc. Yet, at this point, we may see the difference that lies between old and new periods of Meitei Script. Also, we note that it was during the British regime that Bengali replaced Meitei script and that the Roman script appeared for the tribal dialects in the twenties and thirties of this age.

Different theories of the origin of Meitei Script

There is a great deal of controversy concerning the origin. It is proposed to give an ideas of the different opinions held by the writers of

British and Manipuri and to discuss their validity. British Scholars like Fleet, Buhler did not bestow sufficient investigation on the research. Dr. G.A. Grerson in his monumental volumes simply collected the opinion of his predecessors-Damant and T.C. Hodson without any scrutiny. Let us refer to them one by one (A) Mr. Damant is of the opinion that the Old Manipuri alphabet was introduced from Bengal in the reign of Charairongba, who flourished about 1700 A.D. There are no traces of existence of writing in Manipur before that time". G.A. Grierson, L.S.I.,Vol. III, Part II, P/21. Dr. S.K. Chatterji lent support to it.

We can contradict it by judging the evidence/ sources/produced before the reign of king Charairongba in 1700. Meitei script is different from the script of the Bengalis in respect of pronunciation, appearance and writing According to the most authoritative palace Diary of the Meities.

Cheitherol Kumbaba "During the time of King Khagemba (1597-1652), books were produced and teaching the Meitei Script begun" It implies that the alphabets in the form of books inscriptions were already in existence but reducing the lores to writing and teaching them was done on a grand scale under the patronage of the king.[3]

W.Yumjao Singh, a pioneer archaeologist has shown on epigraphic record of Meitei script in the form of series of copper plates which told us that it was developed at least by 721 (Shakabda) /799 A.D. Again in 1859, Major Mcculloch published his well known book, Account of the valley of Manipur .....before Mr. Damant took charge of the officiating Political Agency of Manipur. This book gives photos of two Meitei copies in Meitei script said to be issued by King Khagemba (1597-1652) and king Paikhomba (1666-1697) A.D. They are prior to the reign of Charairongba. Mr. Damant would not make his hasty generalisation on superficial evidence. In fairness to Mr. Damants' critical questioning and approach writing Manipur culture and research publication in the journal of the Bengal Asiatic Society it must not be forgotten that his initiation of discussion was important as a means by which this script was made known to the world through Archaeological survey, Vol. No. 4 written by Mr. Bruges and published in 1882 in Batavia, Germany and collection of 198 Indian Alphabets by Mr. Hachins Ex-Director General in 1873-and 1877.

(b) "According to Mr. T.C. Hodson, local tradition declares that the art of writing was, acquired from the Chinese, who came to Manipur about 1540 A.D." (Same as No. A). The Chinese origin that has been suggested by T.C. Hodson alone can be refuted by saying that the movement of the Chinese alphabets was from the top to the bottom while that of the Meiteis horizontally from left to right. Their way of writing in pictures is so different from the Manipuri way. The few Chinese captives who lived in Manipur were not culturally strong enough to exert any influences on the Manipuris. We have given a hesitating adhesion to this hypothesis. R.M. Nath holds that be Mieteis coming from Chin or shan area and influenced

by these cultures developed the script. The same charge can be made against this opinion.

(C) One significant contribution to the argument is from Captain Dun and Dr. R. Brown whose incidental reference and observation are entitled to great consideration. Dr. R. Brown observes "The written character of the Manipuri is a modification of the Nagri." They have nor adduced sufficient proof for this induction. However the adhesion to this opinion has been afterwards espoused by a host of local scholars who by their theory made it plain that Meitei script is a modification of Brahmi script or a modification to be kutila style prevalent in North India, being in itself a development of the earlier Pan Indian Brahmi Script. Like these alphabets it is written from left to right. It is a kind of difference in appearance. According to them all the 35 letters are derived from the Asokan Brahmi Script. This aspect will be dealt with in another context in this manner.

(d) It is a matter of dispute whether the origin of Meitei script is indigenous or foreign. The nature and particularity of concepts were made to assume native character and disguised so cleverly that the script is the independent invention of local scholars. An opinion upheld by specialists in local lore proves the invention and existence of Meitei script from time immemorial. In the innumerable manuscripts there is mention of alphabets, and myths connected with it, among which some are distinctive. Its high antiquity has as yet to be proved from the archaeological point of view. But the examination and perusal of *Puyas* has proved beyond that the art of writing is as old as the Christian era or older than the lst Century A.D.[4]

We shall refer to some of them one by one

The letters are invented by Guru Sidaba, the Infinite from different parts of his body at the time of the creation of the Universe. The alphabets were at first 16 in number representing the prominent deities of the Meetei Pantheon. According to the decree of the Almighty God Ashiba (the creator of the Universe) must rule the individual dwelling house with the help of these 16 letters. By yet another decree of the Almighty, Pakhangba must support Sanamahi Ashiba) with the help of 24 more letters as the ruler of Universe.[5]

According to the version as recorded in *Thengouron* Guru Shidaba/Supreme spirit said to Ashiba at the time of creation of the Universe, " Look at me ", and He opened his mouth, Ashiba saw in the nerve centres of the stomach the forms of the 35 letters. On seeing them, Ashiba bowed in prayer to the excellent Guru and began creating earth by Thong (Diagrams co-ordinated with the dance movements), so letters are connected with the science of *Thengou.*

Another story attributed to Makik the credit of inventing the alphabets after the pattern of *Shing Shemba* (Preparation of fuels for keeping) by a divine voice. It took place in the Satya age.[6]

According to another account Lord Pakhangba introduced the Meitei character. The various shapes of letters are connected with his snake form.

There are 4 or 5 Pakhangbas mythological or historical, each of which is full of legends, episodes in Meitei thought. If the originator of script is the historical Pakhangba, the first king of the Ningthouja dynasty, the age of the same must be around 1955 years. In other case, the antiquity and impersonal nature is nowhere called into question.

Another legend gives the story in this way

In the Haya/Satya age there was a certain man called Yangen Kurumba, the son of Mangang Ningthou. Being a poor man he used to cut wood of Chingmeirong hill with his wife.

Earth Goddess Laimarel once saw the Paphal (diagram) of her son Pakhangba in snake form and recalled what she saw before, she then prepared a bundle of sticks after the model of the diagram. She then dipped the bundle in water.

Yangen Kurumba, having been informed of what she had prepared discovered the same and kept it in the northern side of his house. Later he felt asleep at midnight Leimarel/Earth goddess appeared before his dream and prepared 13 alphabets out of the bundle of sticks after the pattern of Paphal. (Snake form of Pakhangba). She informed Kurumba to wake up and see it. According by Kurumba examined these with the help of a Lamp. They were inscribed on stone by a divine voice. Earth goddess is said to make 4 more letters and then taught the significance of 17 letters to Kurumba. Kurumba was the first human being who know the mystical and tantric significance of 17 alphabets.[7] It is also surmised that goddess Sinleima caused the basic letters to appear on *Leihouras* (plantain leaf growing in the hills) and dedicated to Mapu (Absolute) for help to human beings. The author and guardian of Meitei script were (after wards) Nongpokningthou/ Siva in the Dwapur age, Great Maichou of the kings of each Chak Yuga. Altogether there were great scholars/professors of sacred texts and scripts living in each age. Their names and works are too many to be discussed individually. They stood on very old tradition and are to be found in the sacred writings.

The second phase spans across the Treta age/Heiya age. It is marked by a great interaction between the Tantric, saivite and local beliefs. Lord Ingouba/Siva (Kaubru) deserves a place in the religious history of the Meities not only as a lover in his lila with Soubon Lairembi Devi, but also as one who contributed to education and culture. He is credited with popularising the script and taught it to Sanamnik, son of king Khing Khing Ngangba. He introduced the idea of sitting in the public school and teaching to the public ideas that are new. It is with him that Korbek (letter board. a paste prepared by mixing dust with water) and Khorjei/letter stick began to be prepared.[8] On seeing Sanamaniks, knowledge of scripts, the king called back his mother to King's Court.

The historical phase of the script i.e. there is an interval of 2000 years during which period great king like Pakhangba, Khagemba, Bhagyachandra

etc. contributed to the final shape of the script. The long list of scholars continued to expound the traditional ways.

It is against this socio-political background that we must study something about the script and puya literature. The majority of the people accepted it basic alphabets in the early stage. Certain letters were evolved and added to the existing ones although we are not clear about what they were. The patronage provided the stimulus for a considerable amount of literature. There was not much activity in the old Meitei school during the reign of Maharajah Garibniwaz (1709-1748). At the instigation of Ramanandi Preacher, Shantidas Gosai, the king burnt up many Puranas written in Meitei script. His reign and the period of his successors, curiously enough overlaps with what is regarded as the age of Bengali and Devanagri script in the court. During the reign of Maharajah Jai Singh (1759-1763), the Meitei letters were made equal to those of Devanagri and Bengali. Now its language has 35 letters, one unused and unpronounced letter and 14 Cheitaps/attachments.[9] Origin of certain letters, viz ga, gha, Bha, It has been accounted from Bengal/Nagari letters. Durgadas Lahiris writings on the origin of Bengali letters in Banga Bhasha and shahitya point to this theory.

Most of the *Puyas*/Puranas were re-written by the scholars privately or officially out of their memory. The literature in Meitei script increased more and more. The following works have gained distinction in Meitei tradition. They are : Laimaral, Yaibirok, Khurminglol, Thilen Achoubi, Mayek Macher, Hakchano Mayek, Cheising Mayek, Singkak Mayek, Ure Mayek, Pakhangba Naoyom, Mayek Laishak Khongba Taibung Shara Pakhengba Salai Makhi Pung Kuyalok, Wakoilol Thiren Thiren Salai Amoilon Pukok Thilel Pokhaiba, Thilel Lairol, KHUNUNGLOL KOKAI PUYA etc.

Within the camp of Meitei school there are two more theories which directed a concerted attack on the traditional script of the palace in view of its association with Sanskrit and Bengali culture.

The challenge to official script came in the thirties of this century in the person of Naoriya Phulo of Cachar who was not only a gifted founder of Apokpa Marup (Meetei Revivalist school) but also a far sighted originator of Meitei script and desanskritised words. He invented a script and numerals as a divine gift in his trance and got a Purana called *Shakok Salai Thiren* said to be written in this script. He and his worthy follower late T. Bokul identified the traditional school as the script associated with Shantidas Gosai the famous Ramandi preacher after the burning of the Puranas of Manipur in the 18th Century.

We are not impressed by their strange fancy since all the valuable Puranas were not written in this script. None of the inscriptions, manuscripts and coins can be deciphered through this artificial script. Late M. Chandra Singh, Pandit Achouba (Royal Scholar) referring to N. Phulo's script holds that some of the alphabets are the modifications of early

Bengali alphabets collected and preserved in Calcutta museum. The letter Lai as found in his script has been derived from a letter as found in Bengal from the 6th to the 12nd Century and the time of the Sen dynasty. The letter Kak has been possibly derived from another letter in Bengal in the time of Sasanka. Yum has been derived from the same in the 9th Century during the reign of the Palas. Jum can be found in the Century under the Mankharis Cham in the 15th Century under the Koshals. The letter Mao in the 9th to 10th Century under the Pals. There is no doubt that his letters are formed by the addition of marks/signs to those letters which are already in Bengali.

The pit dream of this school cannot deal with the problem of script. We have already noted then there was no dearth of script writers and thinkers before him, but it is his special distinction to challenge the royal authority in a period of social and religious turmoil. When the people were accustomed to the use of Bengali, Nag letters and languages. But he has followed this way without consulted the existing script and the manuscripts outside his native place, i.e. Manipur.

There is another school of 18 letters campaigned by Thokachamba on the authority of a puya called Wekoklol Thilel Sali Ameilol Pukok.[10] 16 letters out of 18 are common with the 35 letters school of thought 2 letters namely EE and Un are found in the above Puya and not in other *Puyas*. Accordingly these letters are the genuine Meitie alphabets or Science of script. According to Thokachamba, there are two parallel sets of *Puyas*, one set written with 18 alphabets and another set with 35. In later times the same puya is written in two alphabets. In those written with 35 letters many letters like Ra, Ba, Sha, etc. are found in use.

This approach was greatly helped by a remarkable personality, namely L. Manobi, Ex-Minister, ex-M.L.A. and Proprietor of French Talkies, Imphal. He espoused it because of old Meitei Culture. He was called upon to organise festivals, seminars, political conferences, etc. In the opinion of the author he looked forward to a time when this is letter school would be introduced in Government schools of Manipur. He sponsored a conference at Mapal Kangjeibung from 12th February to 23rd February, 1969 in which the elites and specialists took part. Thokachamba's script together nine supplementary letters were recommended to Manipur Government for use in Educational Institutions. He was also instrumental for setting up a Meitei Mayek expert committee in 1961 and influenced them including the former critics to adopt the same school with the notification of the Government.[11]

But the members of the 36 school (including Anji) were still unsatisfied to recommend and adopt the 27 letters. The scripts appeared in the linguistic Survey of India had been supported by the Meitei Mayek Seminar held on 31-6-1968 and 1-11-1968 and participated by 44 members from Manipur and out side Manipur. It has been confirmed by the Manipur Sahitya Parishat in their resolutions and memorandum addressed to the

Government of India. The Manipur Raj Pandit Loisang Sana Konung (Palace) has issued its opinion in Prajatantra Daily Paper on 4/2/69 wherein it goes in the following. "Sarang Pandit Achouba put up 35 main perfect alphabets for use as they were produced by the Pandit Achouba of the then king of Manipur at a critical time. The above mentioned 35 letters along with those Cheitaps (attachments of words) mentioned in Naoyom Puya must be put in use.

Beside the official Mayek another name with some additions and numerals extent is *Kanglej Mayek* based on the authority of a Puran called *Khamnung Ingal Leisaba* (written during the time of Maharaja Kulachandra during the Anglo-Manipuri war 1891). All together there are many letters in it. Vowels are 12 in number 35 consonants, 14 vowel attachments, 9 apeknga (joint letters) and name of numerals with many zeros Lum).

Philosophical and Mystic Significance of Meitei Alphabets

Out of their love for mysticism and tantric philosophy the Meiteis used the alphabets as vehicles for expressing the mystic significances. Meitei letters have been classified into *Hak* (body) and *Thawai* Mayek (soul) In linguistic expressions they are consonants and vowels which stand to each other in the relation of body and soul Body letters are prior to the soul letters.

Again the first consonant letter Ka is the source of all letters just as God is the soul of souls. A scientific treatise, *Mayek Leishak Khangba* provides us with the concept that it is similar to void or emptiness/shoonya. It assumes a variety of forms. It is one and appears variously. It is God Atiya Shidaba (Almighty) itself". However, later it was second in symbolic importance only to Anji.

In later phases of thought an unused and unpronounced letter called Anji was very important and held in great veneration by the people as the deity of learning. It is identified with the supreme spirit, Goddess Saraswati, Regional version of Om and a mode of Pakhangba Whether it is indigenous or Hinduism in the form of tantrism from the tantric belt of North eastern India in its origin is a point which I leave for competent authority to decide. It is the most sacred symbol in pictorical form and is used in the same sense as the *OM* Amen or the primer dial word. It is like a snake mark with a crescent and a dot at its head. Scholars hold that it is Omji, a corrupted word of Anji. We may give a more or less hesitating adhesion to hypothesis of using Anji as a local origin in view of the growing influence of tantrism in the state. Anji was supposed to be imported into Manipur valley by the Brahmans and the Meitei scholars having a sound knowledge in tantric literature , mss and epigraphs opened with this symbol in the left corner of the first line.[12] In contrast with this theory some scholars hold that it was a pure meitei letter invented by the native scholars of Manipur. From all accounts in the Puya/Purana literature, it would appear that it is the Heiru (Sumeru)/main centre of 35 garland of letters. *Mayek Laishak Khangba* an

important treatise on the presiding deities of 35 letters declares that "At the first poise its mouth bent downwards, Its back turned backwards; raised up its head. Its name is called Anji. "It is not difficult together not only its absolute character but also its two forms and-different styles. (1) Khamnung Anji dark or transcendent Anji and (ii) Ingel Leishaba Anji-Bright or creative immanent aspect of the Almighty. The static or primal Anji has 2 postures whereas the dynamic Anji has 3 (Trivanga) postures. It represents the arrow shaped position of Seven days of the week (13) *Mayek Laishak Khangba* classifies the letters into male, female and eunuch; also acknowledges the existence of a ruling deity for each letter. It describes thus, "K" has got a male character, It is Pakhangba. "KH" male character, Atiya Sidaba; "Q" female character, Laisana (wife of Laphaba), "Gh"female character, Leimaral (Earth goddess),"Ng" eunuch, God Ashiba etc.

There are utterances, treatises, etc. which seem to have a psychological implication of 17 letters invented by Goddess Leimarel. They signify the following– (1) Mind body, (2) Thought, (3) eyes, (4) hand (5) foot, (6) Head, (7) Lap, (8) Nose, (9) Respiration, (10) Lower part of Nose, (11) Ear, (12) Breast, (13) Heart, (14) Koubru hill, (15) Thanga hill, (16) Wangphulel Hill, and (17) Mao hill.

The goddess of Anji has 13 names each of them is a letter (1) A represents sky. Gold complexion, (2) K represents Long Life (3) Kh= strength, (4) L= Healthy, (5) Ng-avoid, funeral (6) m= to be youthful, (7) N= to reign as a king. (8) Y= public sympathy, (9) H= good blood, (10) Ch = to be free from affliction, (11) Y= conqueror of enemy, (12) P= free from accident, (13) U= Plenty of food.

An equally interesting feature was about its association with the evolution of human body. K is compromised with the centre of the soul. Kh with the back side of palm, Ng with part of Kg above the foot and below the ankle, P with Head and Ph with the back portion of the Head like Sanskrit and its daughter languages (Pali and Prakrit)

K is the first letter which represents the whole human body; all other letters are the parts of Ka according to *Hakchangi Laipham* (the shrines of human body) (15) One school goes a step further and suggests the reading of letters as Kok (head), sham (hair), Lai forehead), Na (ear), Chid (mouth), etc.

The Mainpuri spirit does not encourage the proud human invention of alphabets but leads our thoughts out from human works into the divine ordinances. The culture is what we get from *Lailik* (necklace of god) which describes ways of god. Alphabets are called Mayek which is derived from the word Meirik (spark). According to another story, God K Sana Pakhangba, out of his power emitted the different parts of his body in the form of sparks. On seeing the same, Goddess Leimarel Shidabi, mother of Pakhangba assumed the form of a rope and tied all parts of spark like letters like necklace and offered it to the excellent Yum/the Almighty. The sparks

emerging from the mouth of Pakhangba become the letters. As ordained by the Almighty the garland of letters is the representation of Pakhangba-K Symbolises the head of Pakhangba, Kh the leg M., the eyes, Chh the hair, etc. The letters are sacred and are not be defiled by the touch of human feet since they are familiar with the origin.

According to such payas as *Khanoi Yangei. Nongpal Polpi Luwangba., Mayekki Likhul Takpa Puya*, the script falls into three categories (1) to Mangal Mayeks (vowel attachments), (2) 17 Lungyan Mayek (consonants) and, (3) 9 Khamna mayeks (consonant attachments). The scholars show aguaintance with tantric and mystic interpretations of each letter and be 1-10 members. They accepted the theory that letters are necessary for human body which is regarded as being laid own in the second tests. Challenge of letters contained in the *Puyas* means challenge to the Almighty dwelling in them. Shantidas Adhikari, the famous Ramanandi missionary who instigated Maharaja Pamheiba in burning all the Puranas of Manipur (written in Meitei script) was seriously afflicted with incurable diseases.

The letters are what matter most. Leuremba Khongnang Thaba, the eldest pandit related to Langol Lukhoi, his junior Pandit that the letters can create and destroy the mankind sacrifices were performed in accordance with the chanting of letters in due order for preservation as well as for distinction of the universe. The devotional service to the Lord is done by uttering words Hung, Rang, Wang and Lang expressive of offering of materials to him.

The Meitei Script on Ancient Coins and Inscriptions

The Meitei rulers beginning with Pakthangba to Maharaja Kulachandra (Before Anglo-Manipuri war of 1891 A.D.) issued coins and inscriptions during their life time. All of them have been actually found in parts of Imphal valley. Meitei inhabited parts of Tripura, Assam, Bengal and Burma. The inscriptions were either of Devanagari/Shivanagri or Archaic Meitei script or Bengali letters. Late W. Yumajo singh, the pioneer archaeologist has collected some (4) coins where he discovered that coins were struck with the Devanagri script by the 2nd chaitra, 164 Sambet (107 A.D.). The reigning king by this time was Pakhangba, the first king of the Nangthouja dynasty. He has propounded a theory of his own and has observed, u..... . But from traditions that have been collected it is said that before its introduction there were the different scripts that were in use viz shivangri and chakpa. The chakpas are a tribe of men inhabiting the valley of Manipur with distinctive differences in manners and custom from the Manipuri proper to whom they are commonly known as Lios or the conquered people. As there are various reasons to believe that they are originated from the Kubo valley side or beyond it, the script may be allied to some script of that part but as no specimen of this script is yet coming forth it still remains to be determined. On the other hand the shivanagri. From the information obtained from inscriptions in the Devanagri Script on a bell metal gun of the year 1807 A.D. certain stone inscriptions where both

Devanagri and archaic Manipuri scripts have been used to repeat the same text and the fact that the seramposa Mission Aries in the beginning of the nineteenth century printed parts of the New Testament in modern Manipurs Devanagri character. Moreover almost all the coins of the land used to minuted with inscriptions is the Devanagri character to the exclusion of the Archaic Meitei script, even in its palmy days. Thus we find that the coins of the reformer Garibniwaz were minted with his name Devanagri. The generate resemblance of the old Manipuri script with the Devanagri character in their cuts and appearance will convince one of the fact that his script was formulated mainly on the basis of the Devanagri to the exclusion of the Bengali one, whose figures they have adopted perhaps later on.[17]

Against his view we may observe that (1) In our previous description we stated that the script is associated with the legend and creation story of Manipur. Dr. Kalidas Nag is of the opinion that it must have been prior to the time of Asoka the great in view of the abundance of scripts in the shape of birch bar learning the same with pine dust as slate (Khorjei and Korbak).

2. Reference to the use of the term ,i.e., Taret-Mayi-naiba (coin is to be found in a text called *Numit Kappa* (the shooting of the sun) in connection with the sun-worship the mss supposed to be written in the 1st century. Again the work Sel/coin is derived from the word Senbi which means Kabow or part of Burma. According to some scholars Kabow valley was the centre of Meitei script in earlier times.

3. The earliest coin supposed to bear the legend in Devanagri was later manipulation according to modern research. Maharaja Pamheiba was the first King to introduce Nagri script in the coins/inscriptions in his kingdom. Subsequent research revealed beyond any doubt that the above coin was issued by Garibniwas bearing the legend Cheitra Sudhi Tarasavada[2] Sameveda 1646. W. Yumjao assessed 1646 Saka Samvat as 164 on account of delation of the last figure '6' which is existinct.

Inscriptions

We have as many as 40 inscriptions in archaic Manipuri on stone slates, copper, hides (*shading*), etc. According to Shri M. Koireng Singh, Ex Chief Minister, Manipur. Late Madhob Pandit found stone inscription of Meitei Mayek age about 2000 years in the Thangjing hill (Moirang). It is a fact that till now there is no authentic decipherment of this stone inscription.

In the Archaeological report on a series of copper plate in 799 Late W. Yumjao Singh considered the Hindu religious beliefs of the Meiteis but they are found to be in Meitei letters. But this is untraceable at present in any soil/part of Manipur.

4. Bell metal coins issued by the kings in archaic Meitei script are known to them earlier from the Devanagri script. The earliest coin yet brought to light is the one issued by Lairemba (1394-99 A.D.) and the Tradition of using the same was continued till the reign of Maharaja Pamheiba. As per the labour saving practices in the coinage, the initial

letters of the name or the title of the issuing king was used on the coin. Inspite of Burmese attack in its history the rulers did not fail to devote much time and energy to such items as the issue of silver, bell metal and gold coins in archaic Meitei, Nagari and Bengali scripts the number of different coins in Meitei letters will be around 10 had it been found in actual possession, then we would be able to speak as W.Yumajo sing did in his report.

From the inscriptions we can form a correct idea of the letters, evolution according to the ages to which they belong. Stone inscriptions in order of time will be of Kheibu, Konthoujam Lairema, Leisangkhong, Heisam Leirema, Ngaprum Chingjin, etc. In the latter epigraphical periods new letters such as Ba, Gha, Ra, Sha, etc. have been evolved in order to be able to write the loan words and terms from Hinduism. King Kiyamba (1467-1508 A.D.) is said to issue three of the stone inscriptions at Khoibu, a Maring Naga village, an important route to Burma His was supposed to be the first yet to brought light our researchers.

There is another theory upheld by Shakespeare according to which Maharaja Khagamba's stones were prior to Khagamba by almost a century. The same has been studied and dealt with in a number of publications.

1. The inscriptions at Khoibu prescribed as having soft consonants like Ba and Ga in proper places. 1. There are no doubt words like Lainingthou (mode of addressing the King, Chahhayas (progeny) etc. (3) one of the stone contains the symbol of Chakra or a circular figure like the convolutions in the *Salgram*.[18]

The points which are to be discussed here is the period to which these words occur at the supposed earlist inscription from the points of view of palaeography.

In Kheibu Maring village there are at least five stones out of which four of which are inscribed and the remaining one has got the figure of a snake. Of the four, one is badly damaged and letters appear to be Bengali, the rest are in Meitei script. Two of them are purported to have been issued by order of Kiyamba 1 (king) in the 15th Century. Three of the inscriptions in the plain (below the hill) were brought to Imphal and displayed in the State Government Museum, Imphal.

No date is mentioned in them but name of king such as Samairang (518-568), Wura Konthouba (568-658) and Kiyamba (1467-1508) are found in the first and second inscriptions at Khoibu Maring village. Other inscriptions described above do not raise any serious issue since they were written after the period of King Khagamba in the 17th Century. The letters in them are quite distinct and legible to the research workers. They are studied in the bulletins issued by the University of Manipur, Museum Department and Mtuwa Museum, Imphal.

As for the inscriptions in archaic Manipuri said to be issued by king Khongtriekcha in the 8th Century A.D., we cannot, at present give our

judgement in view of their controvertial nature. The series of inscriptions are not available to us our examination and critical studies. Reference to it are made in the publications of the Second (2nd) world war of the Government and a number of learned publications by Non-Manipuri Scholars such as Dr.S.K.Cheterjee, R. M. Nath etc. Final word is to became after the discovery of the inscriptions and official decipherment by the scholars in this field.

There is no doubt that some are to be placed in the beginning of the 19th century (Chourajit or Marjit) It is apparent that proclamations were made during the reign of the early kings, but they were inscribed later. It is rather difficult to obey in what way the inscriptions belonging to the same are to be accubied to the 15th century on epegraphical grounds.

The Advantages of using Meitei script[19]

Acharya Vinoba Bhave held that all Indian letters including Urdu should be written in the Nagri script which has the prospect of becoming an Asian script. If there was a common script, unity and integrity of India will be better assured and all India languages. Dr. S.K. Chatterjee and his supporters devised and recommended Roman script for Indian Languages on many issues (by abandoning their English names, but giving new Indian names or simply their sounds). But their view points do not mean that we should discard our scripts which were indispensable to researchers. We may refer to the qualities and advantages of Meitei script.

1. Meitei script when employed for writing Manipuri words is one of the best scientific scripts since its consonants, vowels and attachments put together provide symbols for all conceivable phonetic variation. Different vowel characters were written as variations of the main vowel with the help of attachments. It was adopted to a certain extent at a late stage and not in the early stages.

All the letters such as vowels and consonants can be shown to derive from the seven lines of the first letter. The attempt made by one or of organisation called Nongdam Shangler in 1969 can reduce the number of letters by least 6. or 7. Letters are formed by pieces of straight lines on a square graph allowing electronic displays on screen.

2. It is a scientific letter which can be written like the letters of English which come one after another in composition and writing. Order of pronunciation is very clear. Most of the vowel attachments are written at the right side of the consonant besides the upper and lower attachments. Simplified letters which can replace hasanta and Akar are found in Meitei letters. Unlike other Indian letters some letters assume changes of shape or inflection say the word is changed, into another in the ending.

3. The vocabulary corresponds to accurate pronunciation and is a rhythm.

A comparative study of Meitei letters with those of different scripts

1. The Sanskrit consonants m, g, ja are absent in early Meitei letters. There are no consonants answering to ga, Ja and da. In the copper plate inscription of the 8th Century, Ganesh is written as Kanarh, Devi as Tebi or Tepi.

Among the vowels, all the vowels with the exception of harswari, dirghri, harswa, li and dughali are found in Meitei script.

2. It was not conductive to the writing of yukta-Kasharas/combinations of letters. One finds it difficult to write clusters of consonants such as Kshtri, Brahman, Park, student, etc. This was cured by inventing the some in later paired when these words appeared. Even now it was not possible for the scheduled caste and tribes to speak or write the Indian Philosophical words, even it they had wanted to do so.

3. Like the Indian alphabets, the consonants are arranged in groups of five known as vargas. Kvarga chavarga, Javarga etc. The most important musical sound is represented by the letters as in the case of Hindi and vrajavali. The letters are pronounced as ka, kha, ga, etc. They are written from left to right.

Inflections are assigned to the words, when used in the middle of word, or after a consonant. Each consonant must have a vowel inflection.

4. The first ten figures of Arithmetic are differently written in different figures but punctuation marks such as fulstop, comma and semi colon are represented by vertical strokes O. lines are common. (11) No uniform treatise on the numerals and punctuation marks have come down to us. Some patterns are given in mss such as *Wachetlon, Pathup, Polpilang, Mayek Tamnaba Lairik* etc.

In our observation the numerical signs are allied to Arabic system, the units being expressed by a single figure, the tens by two, the hundreds by three, etc. Nonglum/zero is common to both. The familiar Meitei names of places of figures are as follows Lum (0), Chakluk (10), Lapun (100), Lipua (1000), Lating (10000, Lakak, Laak, UK, A Chaluk, Lairoi, Laikhamlen, etc.

Numerals and methods of numeration are not in use already. Different groups invented different numerals and enumerating them. The numerals furnished in the *Wakoklol thilel Salai Amailol* and put up by a group has been accepted by the Govt of Manipur. But we notice similarities between the numerals of Tamil, Tellega, Brahmi, Devanagri and Maithili and some of Manipur. Some of Brahmi letters (E,) are similar to those of the Meiteis with the addition of bars some are found to modify south Indian script (and with bottom bars)

Pattern of Reading and giving names: There are different opinions in respect of pattern of reading and grouping patterns. The traditional pandits of the Loisang (Royal institution) give names to the alphabets as ka, kha, ga Devanagri script need not monopolise the vocal sound of the people of this

land. There in terms of limbs and part of the body, are terms of concrete things. According to the third school as represented by Late Nityai and W Gulamacha, consonants must be read as Itingkok, Kham, gum, Ngam, Chai, Chhai, I am Jhai, etc., vowels should be read as H, Ha, Hei, Yei, Hum, Um, Ara, etc. According to Meitei Pakhangba Thougan Marup letters should be read as Kang Khang, Gang, etc. Vowels must be read as in the Devangri. Kong, Khang, Gang are the sounds of Gods. A certain W. Kanhai Meitei advanced the view that Alchi, Khak, Tranat, Phup. AK, Hak, etc. are the correct patterns. The Poiroi Meitei Marup hold that they must be read as Ara, Ang, Ira, Eng, Um, Am and so on, Naoriya Phulo, the Founder of Apokpa Marup deals with the grouping patterns and mode of reading an Cm, Ara, Ira, Pek, Un, Gum, Hang, Yem, Yei, Kak, Dhan, Nong, etc. Enormous difficulties were added by these groups who dogmatically claim that their view or stand alone is right. These claims amount to the fallacy of exclusive predication. To read them as ka, kha, ga, cha, etc. also is quite in keeping with the view accepted by the Nagri scholars. It is of recent developments and not of the pattern in days gone by according to our research. It is again pointed out that the people in the 19th century used to read them like Kikoma da Khi-khm-da Kiyok etc. The suffix. Ma may be soaking words which flourished in Burma and parts of Manipur.

The mode of giving names and writing show affinity to the Burmese and the Shans (kabows) on account of its Political and cultural relation from the 1st century to the 18th and the early part of the 19th century. We have a number of words beginning with Ng sound and Burmese origin speakers of Indo-Aryan language cannot directly pronounce the words beginning listing. As for example, the Europeans corrupted Ngamai into Angami.

(iii) Declining Trend of Meitei Script

For the last century stackness prevailed in the use and culture of their script. Hinduism in the form of Bengal Vaishnavism was marked in Manipur. External influence extended in a greater dimension but the use of this script for writing the sacred Puranas, documents and genealogies has been fostered by the rulers. Pandit, great maichous/ scholars and Maibas/ Priests produced a substantial mystic literature in this script. H. Dannant the acting political Agent of Manipur caused this script to appear in print in the pages of the journal of the Asiatic Society for the first time. After the conquest of Manipur by the British in 1891, the British authority killed the spirit of the people by burning do vn a number of sacred literature, by destroying the emblems and imposing Bengali script and language on the masses. It is based on political and administrative purpose. During the regime of the British the people had not the courage to care about the neglect of this script and the initiative to act upon their conviction. But even during the colonial period we can see the establishment of such organisations as Vivodha Janani Sabha and Manipur Sahitya Parishad, etc. which had their aim and purpose the preservation and protection of Meitei

script and culture. In 1934 the script was in the printed form and the alphabets were circulated in different parts. Shri Potsangbam Tomal Singh the pioneer artist (in gold and bronz) and later an eminent freedom fighter I.N.A. was instrumental for producing this script and printed in the pages of Yakairol Journal under the editorship of late Dr. N. Leiren Singh.21 The Meitei script did not die a sudden death, but survived for these years more in the culture people than in the western educated people. The educated people are eager to Judge the culture and education of Manipur with the standard of the west. Not being clear sighted and research minded they have no idea whatsoever how to arouse interest in their script and language.

Initiative for the revival of it was taken by the revivalist schools with their own script and numerals from the latter part of the Maharaja Churachand's reign to that of Maharaja Budhachandra. The work of recognising and introducing the same remained pending even after Indian Independence, Integration of Manipur with India in 1949. restoration of Legislative Assembly, and attainment of Statehood in 1972. Before the merger of Manipur with India emblems, seals, name plates, tickets written in this script did not escape the notice of the author. Due to resistance from a group against the script of another, increasing use of Bengli, Hindi letters in the educational Institutions and Govts indifference to this issue, step at the level of the highest authority was not possible.

The foreign missionaries converted all the tribals to the Christian faith during the colonial times and gave Roman script to their dialects. Educated tribal leaders are not in favour of Meitei script and language.[22]

New moves for introducing Meitei Mayek in the Sixties and seventies

But emergence of new enthusiasm efforts at popularising the same have been made by different Associations and organisations. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru the prime minister of India visited Manipur in 1952 in connection with the transfer of Kabow valley to Burma. He saw the *Puyas* written in Meitei script. he stood hypnotised to see it. This is the reason why Manipur never form a part of a bigger state after the states reorganisation commission of India.[23]

The author remained in constant touch with the gurus, traditional specialists in sacred lore upon whom the state had fondly bestowed respectable titles (Such as Late. Th. Madhob Singh, Ch. Birahari Singh, S. Koba. Ng. Kulachandra, etc.), happened to associate himself with prestigious organisations like Manipur Pandit Sabha, Meitei Mayek Organising and Research Association, Kanglei Meitei Enat Mrup, The Meitei Cultural Organisation, The Manipur cultural Research Association Ltd. Nongdam Shanglel Thangmeiband, Meitei Mayek Thigatpa Amasung Sandokpa Kanglup.[24]

A two days seminar on the script of Manipur was arranged from 31.10.68 to 1.11.68 at Johnstone Higher Secondary under the auspices of Rajkumar Priyogopalsana (afterwards principal of Dance college, Imphal) and his group. The idea behind the seminar was to discuss the problems of

introducing the official Meitei Mayek and to find out the ways of introducing the same in the school. It was attended by the minister, officers, reputed scholars and participants. They have agreed to follow 35 letters as approved by the palace Loisang and appeared in the pages of *Linguistic Survey of India, Vol. (III)*. Discussing has aroused Keen interest in Manipur and outside. Some research associations boycotted and walked out from the conference in view of the orthodox attitude of convenors.

In strong challenge of the findings of the seminar L. Manaobi, president of the Manipur Cultural Research Association Ltd. convened a big conference embracing many institutions and pandits. It formed into one under the common name "Lol Amasung Mayek Neinaba Apunba Marup" for a conference on alphabets. 1969 to 27th July 1969 for long six months in which the important persons and intellectuals were invited to participate. Connected leaflets, pamphlets, literature have been printed and distributed among the public. The organisations became extinct with the close of the ground session and assigned the powerful organisation with responsibilities of submitting the recommendations to the government of Manipur for follow-up action. The conference solely depended on a Puya called Wakolol Thilel Salai Amailol produced by late Thokachamba. Other opinion and authoritative records were simply neglected. This treatise contains sections on the origin, nature characteristic, form and shappe along with the method of reading the alphabets. L. Manaobi, proprietor of friends talkies and Ex-Minister was the brain behind the gathering and had been an abiding influence in the mind of the Judges and delegates to accept their school without any prejudice to other groups. The conference recommended 18 main alphabets, 8 Lonsum Eyek (inflectional form), 9 cheitap eyek (vowel attachments), and 9 numbers of the said Puya under the chairmanship of Shri L. Jogeswar Singh Ex-M.P. The cyclostyled recommendation of the conference and printed summary of the association contains details throwing light on the manipulations and attempts to drag the people in their school. 26. The Metei Marup organisations under the leadership of late T. Bokul took dissent from the above stands and organised its meetings and demonstration. Shri Y. Yaima, the then Education Minister of Manipur took a keen interest in the script and ventured on deliberation in his room by summoning the leaders and scholars representing various schools. The government has set up Meitei Mayak Advisory Committee since 1973 in order to submit its recommendation to the government after much deliberation. The government by its decision agreed to introduce its teaching from the accademic session of 1982-83. The unstable ministry and change of ministry affected the file processing of the government.

In response to public pressures and representations on the issue Manipur Legislative Assemble took note of an independent move and anonymously adopted for further action. The government have appointed on expert committee of 12 members with the than Chief Minister (Y. saiza)

and Dr. L. Chandramani Agricultural Minister as the chairman and convenor respectively vide Govt. order No 1/33 SSE/78 Dated 16.11.78. After 24 sittings in a period of 8 months the committee submitted its report to the government at a function held in the Chief Minister's Bungalow on August 6,1979. The members representing different views were in different minds and agreed to invite experts from the National Archives of India and Asiatic Society of Bombay. Later they turned away from the same as there was no expert in them on Meitei Letters. Shri L. Manaobi M.L.A. wielded considerable influence in the reconciliation of the members in supporting his stand. The experts committee endorsed and recommend the letters and numerals as contained in the Amailol Pukok and as earlier submitted by the Manipur Culture Research Association Ltd. Imphal, suggestion have been to use Lum in order to indicate hard letter (without it means soft letter), to use an underline for writing Apun Eyek (joint letter) and also to adopt internationally accepted marks and signs. 28 It may be interpreted as an official attempt to reintroduce the indigenous Meitei script and place it as the true repository of our culture. After an inspiring speech by Late Yangmaso Shaisa on 6 August 1979 at 11.30 he gage a cash award of Rs. 1000/-each to the members of the committee their effort. Befitting the occasion half holiday was declared for all state government offices and institutions.

The official alphabets with the pattern of sounds have been published in the state gazette with others to be taught at class VII of all educational institutions. The Directorate of School Education, Manipur has brought out a text book with the approved letters in the shape of foundry products. Many voluntary associations wrote and published manuals, leaflets and texts in this script in cyclostyled form and conducted coaching class for the interest of the young people. The people are observing the voluntary efforts in this field and are awaiting the final results.

The action of the government did not stop other prominent organisations from trying alternative means. The influential organisation (also the Place Loisang) called meetings of the enlightened section and tried to win them to their stand of 35 letters. The proposal in favour of the government stand was stoutly resisted as the approved letters could not help us in reading the old *Puyas* and documents which have heavy tonal vowel letters. The official manual contained certain errors in pointing certain letters (001, sam) also. Fortunately, the authorities of the said Parishad adored Manipur University, state Department of Manipur and responsible academic bodies of India. They monopolised the prescription of their publication at all levels of education. They showed scant regard to other publications and contribution of qualified local people. The government of Manipur have not so far intervened in their structure and functions, nor did they issue any written directives. The Parishad's publications and resolutions purported to have been approved by the state government have been working well. However on the issue of the script, the stands differed.

The issue of the script was brought at the level of the Gauhati High Court by pandit Chongtham Iboyaima, a leader of an organisation called Manipur Pandit Sabha. The same was also brought to the notice of the Supreme Court by the members of Meitei Marup for cancelling the Govt. order.29 But till now the case was kept in abeyance and no decision has been made against the government of Manipur by the courts.

We are inclined to disagree with reference to any suggestion That the script was derived from the inspiration of the leaders in the early 20th century. It is not possible for us to support them who held that Meitei script is wholly copied from Brahmi or Devanagri since it has certain independent features of sound as in yi (1), yee (EE),Wu (u), in the *Puyas*. It employs a method of writing 2 or more consonants of the same letter by writing once Pepupa. Here only one P is sufficient with different vowel attachments.

In course of its evolution it was enriched and modified by its social and cultural contacts with the rest of India and Burma as we found the impacts on Meitei script (Ng sound).

I now conclude this paper with the following observations and suggestion.

1. The ancient scholars who had carried on research of the Meitei Mayek (Some say Eyak) in manuscripts and carved on stones, copper, etc. are of the opinion that the first letter was in the form of figure of Atiya Sidaba/Pakhangba (snake God), as time passed, it assumes the form of totems, then into readable letters. Also there are stages of the script which we can classify as the earlier and later script on account of certain reasons.

They came to the conclusion that during the early phases there were only 18 consonants and 1 vowel making a total of 19 letters. Later, after the Hindunisation, the modern form came into existence comprising 35 alphabets. They are in usage even to this day. The majority belongs to this type.

2. The most ancient and the greatest of spiritual writings in Manipur containing a wealth of knowledge and truth emanated from the great Maichous/Pandits. Since those were the days of the royal authority, 35 letters then prevalent were used in writing the magnum opus, *Cheitharol Kumbaba* (Royal diary). They evolve the letter capable or producing cause and effect by their utterances and differential qualities.

Some of them are very powerful and strong. Mantras constituting life-forces were in this form of letters. The powers of these letters coupled with the sacred mantra 'Hum'/'Om' permeate the macrocosm and the microcosm in this universe is an established truth.

3. The approved script has many letters in common with the early records of the state. It may be easy for printing and type writing although the school of L. Manaobi Ex-Minister claimed their humble gift to the people. In our opinion we may look forward to other steps.

4. Mss written in this script and the inscriptions and other epigraphic records could be deciphered and interpreted only by the specialists of this

lore and script and the elders. The greedy Christian missionaries and other antirevivalist groups destroyed them and won over the leaders of scheduled caste and tribe (hill people) to their side. Against their wanton vandalism the script and the epigraphic records must be made very alive through the voluntary efforts of enthusiastic young squads. They should go to the remote village and taught its message so that they can remember their values.

5. It is in the hands of the authorities of the state to issue orders for using sign, name plates, name of officers and written records in Meitei script (side by side with Hindi, English, etc.) not only in state offices but also in govt. offices in Calcutta, New Delhi, etc. Some of the Daily papers, magazines and publications of the state department included some sections of Meitei script out of their attachment to it.

6. Special coaching in this script for new Manipuri High officials must be arranged by the government as a part of developmental activities. It must nurture and build on the strength of our heritage and not discard the treasure out of sympathy or misinterpretations. 30

Notes and references

1. Points supplied by Pandit Ch. Birahari and S. Koba Meities who had earlier worked on the mss. of Imphal and the scheduled castes.
2. My observation.
3. L. Ibngohal and N. Khelchandra, Cheitharol Kumbaba, 1957, Imphal pp23-24, J. Shakespeare. The Religion of Manipur 1943, pp 410-12.
4. Pakhangba, the first historical king rose to power during this time. His reign is a land mark in all round development of Manipur.
5. Khunung Puya ms.
6. See foot note 1.
7. A Nodiachand, (ed.) Eyek Sallai amasuny Numit Thapal, 198[illegible], pp 115-119.
8. Late Pandit H. Mani Sing, Ngandai Laikai Landai Puya Meihouba, IInd part, Imphal, 1957, pp 3-5. 20-23.
9. Late T. Bokul Meitei Mayak Khandoknabagi Panbai (The true Meetei Alphabet evolved from the patterning of the cultural Anthropology), Imphal 1969, pp. 7-48 M. Chandra Singh Pandit had presented his opinion in his articles and monograph in 1967-73.
10. I got a printed copy of the said Puya (ed. by Late Thokachamba) from L. Manaobi when I called on him in his office on 10-5-63. It is attributed to Maichou Apoinanke Macha of the court of king Khagemba (17th century)
11. Iron Amubi Pandit, Meitei Mayek Mapi (mayek Laisakkhengba,) (edited) Imphal 1970 pp 1-11, Pakhanga Naoyon, Imphal 1985 pp 1-10

12. " According to the writers of the medieval period Anji is the most sacred symbol. Light is to be sought with the help of this letter.
13. About this conception I got some idea from Pandit Ch. Birahari Singh ,S. Koba Hung Maiba of Imphal , and Pandit Ng. Kulachandra of Sanakoung (Palace).
14. Akoijam Nodiachnd Amaiba, Eyek Salai amusing Numit Thapal, Imphal 1981 pp. 116-120.
15. The theme is developed by A. Yaima Singh in his book, *Keiueegi* Matik Mayekki Phidup, Landum, 1981, and by Yumnaba Tamphajao in his Kanlei Eyek Epi 18 gi wangulon (Philosophy on 18 Kanglei Alphabets) Imphal 1974.
16. Loe cit, the Meitei scholars did not seem to have been much in favour of the aspect of growing the popularity of Bengali script.
17. Late W. Yumjao Singh , Archaic Meitei or Early Manipuri (monograph on Archaic Meitei), Imphal, 1985, pp. 2-3, Late, R.M. Nath, The Back Ground of Assamese culture, Gauhati, 1978, pp. 86-87.
18. Late W. Yumjao Singh. Op. cit, pp. 11-14.
19. Dr. S.K. Chatterji, seclet Papers. Vol-I New Delhi, 1972, (A Roman Alphabet for India) pp. 257-300),cf. Late Acharya Vinoba, Language Problem Varanashi, 1970, pp 27-31. They develop a common script on different groups worthy of their erudition and culture. I have made use of their ideas with reference to Meitei script.
20. We have yet to find out the affinity between Meitei and Burmese alphabets on analysis. The way of reading the Brahmi scripts and modifications in Burma, Shan States and Manipur must have some similarity It is also probable that the Meitei Population from the Chinese or Shan or Kabavarea were responsible for modification of Manipuri tunes and use of Burmese words.
21. Kh. Chandrasekhar Singh (ed.), Manipur Kalakar Vol.-(I),1976, pp 90-91.
22. Eye-witness Account.
23. -do-also a leaflet issued by Meitei Mayak Thigatpa Amasung Sandopka Kanglup, Imphal 1967.
24. I have been in touch with the office-bearers of these organisations and procured this research publication.
25. I happened to be a delegate in the seminar arranged in Johnstone Higher Secondary on 31-10-68 and 1.11.68. vide the pamphlet issued by Meitei Mayok seminar committee.
26. I am an observer in the conference and consulted the connected papers and resolutions.

27. The processing of files took place during the following ministries-M.P.P. Ministry, Congress-I Ministry and Janata Ministry led by late Y Saiza. The Ministers are much the same persons though they changed their political parties.

28. Vide the printed/cyclostyled primers on Meitei alphabets and proceedings of the sittings of Meitei Mayak experts' committee. I have read with interest the relevant books and papers in which they have stated their view.

29. The leader of these groups talked to me and produced the files in the law court

30. Vide my article on "Meitei Mayak Likhun" which was published in 1972 (about April-July). The points have been improved in many places to make them suitable for the learned scientists/scholars of the congress.

10

THE SCHEDULED CASTES OF MANIPUR WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE LOI COMMUNITY

Preliminary Remarks

There are seven enlisted Scheduled Caste communities in Manipur according to the Scheduled castes and Schedule Tribes Amendment Act 1976 (NO. 108 of 1976). There are (i). Dhupi Dhobi, (2). Muchi/Ravidas, (3). Namsudra, (4). Patni, (5). Sudradher, (6) Loi and (7). Yaithibi. Among them the last two are the original inhabitants and indigenous communities whereas the rest are of exogenous nomenclature. Our records show that the first five groups arrived in Manipur in the 20th century on reasons of migrant labour and in search of better livelihood. Zirighat Sub-Division., in the western side of Manipur is the place inhabitant by the Namsurdras and Patini from East Bengal and Cacher. Most of the exogenous groups live almost in Imphal Proper. The final population figures according to 1971 census were 16,376 and constitute 2% of the whole population. The actual population figures that the figures in 1981 is of the order in between 21,549 and 26,786. The decinnial growth rate during the decade from 1971 to 1981 is around the order of 32%. The estimate may grow stabile on account of the inclusion of primitive Meities of Kwatha village in Tengoupal district in the list of Schedule Castes. There has been a tendency on the part of some politician to treat the Meities also as Scheduled castes under the constitution of India.1 For the purposes of this paper we are concerned with the Loi Communities and the Yaithibies in the context of their ethnology, culture and dialects. They have been one of the best written about and amusing communities in the early decades of this Century.

The Meaning of the Loi

The Word "Loi" is used innumerable times Manipuri vocabulary and written texts and each usage as an independent word or as a prefix and Suffix repays a little study. It means , subdued, dependent, outcast, backward and to complete or to be completed. It is obviously connected with the degraded or subdued groups, out caste and low caste people. Manipuri population, and therefore was to be connected with their dialects, functions culture and belief so often found on their lips It is now in connection with a bad sense that we use it as a prefix or suffix in Manipuri language: e.g., "Loi Kaba" (to return from exit) " Loi thaba " (to exile in the Loi village or expulsion from the country to a place outside Manipur, "Loi Kpa" (to receive somebody while returning from exilment), Loi Haba

(to pay tribute to a conquering power), Loi Chanba" (to conquer a country " Loi thoikpa" (to kill), " Loibi " (Hill or tribal people) " Sajikloi " the grazeir section) etc.

In Manipuri Sociology, We, come across many kinds of Backward classes such as phungani (Kings Servant) Panna Khutmei (Persons not belonging to 4 panas), Hidakphaba (to attend to the Hooka) Tengkhul (gardeners of the kings), Kei (guard of barns) and Lois 2 All of them except the Lois and Yaithibis became Manipuri Hindus. Some of the Loi Groups are long ago considered to be within the Manipuries as pucca/Clean people and their old lineage was completely Manipuri missed. In course of time it has come to mean all, cases of backward or artisan (except the Muslims) classes of Manipuri valley, who inhabit all the villagers at the foot hills of all directions. This include the immigrants coming from eastern countries like Burma, China etc. and from the western countries e.g. different parts of India and some tribals captives in the war. But they had been regarded as second class citizens under the Kings of Manipur. It also consists of a hand full of the descendants of the culprits and criminals (including the Brahmans) according to Law.3

The Origin of Loi Community

Although a large body of stories, articles and references have been available about the different Lois, any conclusive finding at this stamp is only provisional. With regard to the origin authorities have developed different theories since the different lois are of various origin and composite structure. According to Meitie Pandits well-versed in pouranic lore, the Lois are the descendants of God Atiya, The eldest son of Guru Sidava (Almightiess) and Leimaral Sidavi (Earth-goddess). He is ordained to live in the hill villages far away from the capital on account of his foolishness.4 The Chakpas by their tradition think that they once occupied the fort of our capital Kangla from which they were driven out by Pakhangba, the first Historical King of Manipur around 1st century A.D. The Archaeological relies at Kangla Capital and a place named Chakpa Yengaoupung support this point 5 Chief among the elder lois were the groups whom we called the northern groups (Sekmai, Andra, Khurukhul, etc.) whom we can best identify as the people migrating from China, Burma, etc. before Pakhangba and later by the time of Naothingkhong and Khangemba. They themselves believe that their forefathers live in Nongmaiching hill. The southern groups of lois is represented by Chairel, Sugnu and some villages, on the Imphal river, the Southern extremity of the valley. Their language is different from those of the northern groups. They also believe that their ancestors were resident in the slopes of Nongmai ching Hill shifted to the Southern parts of Manipur. Dr. R. Brown relates that they appear to be the descendants of the former inhabitants of Moirang, one of the 16 original tribes which occupied the southern. He further observes that there are hill men belonging to this Loi population. Their customs became mixture of those practised by hill men and the Meiteis .What he remarks may be

applied to a certain section of the people living in these areas near Moirang. In appearance the Lois varying between the pure Meities and the tribals .

The vocabulary of the Loi community

It was quite surprising to the British anthropologist and writers (R. Brown, Mcculloch, Dr. Griesson; T.C.Hodson, etc.) that the dialects of the Loi groups are too many as one groups.

Namely Sekmai speaks a dissect only understand by themselves and it is said to have affinity with Le Burmese. Dr. Grierson noticed the dialect of the Chairel Sekmai, Andro in his Report on the linguisties survey of India, Vol.IIIp.III through the courtesy and help of some scholars. But none of them has been returned for the survey as they were extinct probably. They used to speak Meitei language in a peculiar tone and accent. However in the early days of British regime they have the advantage of studying the vocabulary of these groups. They speak in their own dialects among themselves whenever theirs numbers are two or three. Of all the lois of Manipur it was only the people of Kwatha loi village near the Burmese town of Tamu adopted Manipuri since early time and they till now know no other language except Manipuri.

G.H.Damant by his unique paper "Note on the Loi" pp 241-242 and short Andro vocabulary on p 253 in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic society, V-XII, 1880, attempts to categorise their dialects under the Kuki Chin group. But Dr. Griersan and T.C. Hodson have contradicted this position on the authority of the vocabularies published by Major Mc Culloch in his monograph.

We are not in a position to put the different dialects under any specific category although attempts were made to show their connection with the eastern Naga group of language. From Mc Culloch's collection of the vocabulary of the Chairel dialect (said to be a specimen of southern group of the Lois) it appears to be a mixture of Meitei, Kuki and some unknown tongue. But materials are scanty to establish its precise link with the northern group as represented by Sekmai, Undro, Feiyeng, etc. The group of the northern loi section have many common words—

English	Sakmai	Andro	English	Northern loi group	Eastern Naga
Father	-Apa	-Apa	I	-Nga	Ngo
Dog	-Ki	-Ki	Fire-	Wal	-Wan
Earth	-Ka	-Ka	Eat	-Sale	-Sale
Mother	-Ame	-Ame	Goat	-Ke	-Kei
			Eye	-Mit	-Mika

The northern language Loi group may be shown to resemble with eastern Naga group.

The Loi people were generally quite illiterate. The pandits of the loi groups are educated in Meitei scriptures and Puranic lores in intellectual life they adopted Meitei script for purposes of writing under the Vaisnava Kings. The language and literary forms were in their pure form. Such as they were spoken 100 years' back, when the loi life was much more self-

contained. But the different loi dialects show a large number of Manipuri, Sanskrit and Bengali works; showing the invasion of Meitei Vashnava ideas into their domestic and social life. As in the forward communities Sanskrit names like satrasal, lakhen,, Chandra, etc. are found popularity among the names of persons.[7] The Manipuri version of the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and texts written under Hindu influence (such as Amahadhi, Sanamanic, Dhananjoy Laibu ninaba, etc.) were widely cultured by them specially on the occasion of ceremonies and festivals.[8] Here is an extract of the opening line from a ms possessed by them.

Arang Sanamba,, Ka Sanamba, The maker above sky,, the maker of earth,

Ireng Ingthu,, Atek Ningnate, Our great grand father,, great grand mother I bow to the.

The loi people figures to some extent in Manipur dramas, novels and stories. The dance of the different groups has been recognised by the researchers as distinct schools of folk dances. Tradition still points out to Fayeng, Andra, etc. which are believed to have been the places of lilas of goddess such as Phaeibi, Panthoibi and God Soraral (Indra). Some are very beautiful and ought to be better known. Phaoibi's incarnation deals with her nativities along with her seven companions. Typical tragic love story is of Chakpa macha Saphaba and Chakpa Ningol Nura Saphabi who proposed to recuperate their love on the condition of completion of the weaving of Saphabi. Their companies tried to give false information to them. On getting the removed completion of drum saphabi committed suicide. The youth dies in a short time apparently to join his lover in the land of God.8

Their industries, development of art and crafts and usefulness have been felt and appreciated by all concerned: e.g. the sketch of their skill in their books by the British writers. The Manipur state Museum and private museums have given us some collection of clothes, sticks (made of Kangraibi wood as a present to the girl by the lover in Andro), Tray shaped pirn (langshak) with different figures silk, fans, mat, etc.

With the advance of Meities under the long reign of Sir Chandrakriti Maharaj K.C.S.I.C.B.E., the dialectical distinction of the lois and the meiteis were abolished. Therefore Meitei nations were in superimposed on them. They began to abandon their dialects, food habits, dresses and customs in favour of modernised ones. It has been pointed out elsewhere that they have surnames exactly similar to those of the Meities.

The Religious Beliefs

The more commonly known groups being Chakpas, Andro, Chairel, etc. are scattered all over the parts of the valley spot from the hill areas of the state. They believe in a supreme being called Sewang lai/Surraren which is invoked as Chakpa Ariba Sawang Athupa Chakpa pokpa soraren Achiba (the early Chakpa sawang, the mysteries , the forefather of them) at their original ways at all times. In the language of Damant " it is Pagan tinged with Hinduism" The word Sawang is comming from the Chinese

word Iwang. Some Meitei Gods such as Sidaba (sky father) Leimarel (earth goddess), Senamahi (household deity), Kaubru Loyalikpa wangbaren Guardian deities of all directions), Ichum Leiremb and some important umang lais (Forest deities) have been worshipped with proper rites according to the pattern of culture. While no animal scarifies is performed now among the Meitis, but they still performed it. There are purely Loi deities such as Chaningkhombi, Mengkhongba (cat voiced) and Hamei Metpa (goat eyed) and Panam Ningobthou. Panam Ningthou in whose honour the lai harasses of Andro is held is said to protect the crops, paddy, etc. against hail storm and thunder. The Los of Fayeng worship the sun in April by offering a white fowl and white pigeon. In the village of Andro the offering consists of 2 pots of rice beer, 2 fowls (one for the sun and another for the moon) a sort of cake made of hard boiled eggs, roasted fish, vegetables, mustard seed in every months. At sunrise the title holders of the Village make obeisance to the rising sun and proceed to eat the offerings themselves.

The loi groups worship the clan Gods whose names coincide with those of the clans of the Meiteis. It is pretty much beyond dispute that all the Meiteis are quite aware of the powers of the Loi deities and they are the guardians of the Meitei Kings, who on important occasions send the ceremonial offerings to them. The king or his nobles are required to dismount from the horse or litter in the groves of these deities. None of the produce of their groves not even the leaves or grass may be removed or cut, except in the service of god. No bird nor beast may be killed at random in one of these groves. Instances are on record that Queen mother Maisnam Kumudini Devi, mother of Sir Chandrakriti Maharaja adored Sawang Lai, the ruling deity of Fayeng and looked upon his shrine as the centre of country's prosperity. She offered a special design of cloth called Chirong Sha-Nga Leirong Phi (garment full of hook-like motifs, Khoi mayek, figures of worms, animals and fish) on the occasion of her son's meeting with the viceroy on a ship in Cachar on the river of Barak in 1874. (Viceroy's Yacht on the Barak river). Besides the celebrated grove, there are two more sacred places from Panam Ningthou. (1) Cane brake and (2) a small mound a little away outside the village. The result of the divination in these shrines is believed to be, good or evil of the king and country for a particular year.9

Most of the Loi people such as Fayeng, Andro, Sekmai, Khurkhul, Leimaram, etc. believe in sorcery, black magic and evil eye. Even now they still believe in the practise of killing a man by spells, of causing total blindness to some body by black magic and alluring one in love affairs on the payment of some money. Of their occult powers it is hardly necessary here to discuss at length. The most typical of them is the life of Nungsuk Phaba of Andro village. He appears to have been a man of extraordinary powers as is seen from the fact that by his deep knowledge of the shrines of Nongmaiching hill could have vision of Panam Ningthou. He is fabled to

shoot a naga chief by his arrow and to play his sorcery upon the Nagas who came to attack him at his house. He is said to have been killed by the British for his support of Iringaba's revolt in 1881.

Specially interesting in this connection is the discovery of a series of copper plates by late W. Yumjao Singh form Phayeng loi village in 1935. The contents give a clear and vivid account of the change of religious belief and cult of the Manipuri people as a whole. The King of Manipur (799AD) is familiar with the worship of Puranic Hindu Gods and mode of worship. But the impact of this movement on the paucity of materials. Curiously enough not a single line on the faith of the Fayeng Loi people has been found in these plates.

Worship of the Fire— Like the Parsis and Vedic Aryans the Loi Section worships Fire in its own right and sometimes age the representation of the Sun. It is never treated as Umanglai (Forest Deity) batch of Immigrants brought the burning fire to Manipur by about 33 AD. It is to be remarked that before Poireiten the people particularly some Section of the Lois (Chakpas) knew the art of using Fire in connection with making pottery and cremation rites. An old text called Poireiton Khunthokpa informs us that Poireiton saw the Chakpas disposing of their dead by cremation but this has been eclipsed in Manipuri belief and practice by his immigration and consequent political changes in his time. One line of a hymn identifies Poireiten as the First who brought fire to this country. The second line refers to the continued preservation of Fire by his younger brother, Paonaota. The Fire brought by him about 1934 year's ago is still kept burning in the Village of Andro-Lois by supplying fuel and firewood by its household at regular intervals. The second Fire is preserved in a building near the Temple of Panam Ninghthou. The Village Khullakpa is in-charge of it. Two watchmen are earmarked in turn to keep vigil on it. In view of their work the Andro Lois are exempted from the tiresome lalup system by the Kings. The privilege conferred was engraved on copper plates which are still to this day It is perhaps the oldest man make Fire in India which has been burning without interruption for Centuries. As a most secred Fire it was to be used by lighting a lamp for the coronation of the Meitie Kings. For other strictly State functions, the Andro Fire is invariably necessary. Its ashes were thought top possess some medicinal properties in getting the deaseses cured. It is the practise of the Andro people to take this Fire for lighting at the time of Formal inauguration of a house whether it is normally, naturally constructed or built after accidental destruction by fire. This group say Andro Lois enjoy an enviable position in Meitei culture in so far as the caste Hindus, even royalty confer a unique honour on them.

During the Lai Haraoba of all villages (irrespective of Lois) all concerned in it must use clean fire which is prepared from rubbing flints or by drawing a band of cane quickly and forwards across a piece of tinder.

Rites-de-passeses

As a distinct people they have their well established custom and Codes which are held to be obligatory in the life cycle. The rites de-passeses were marked by the emple use of rites-rice beer, beer, pig, hen ,etc.

Their main staple food is rice eaten with chicken, pork and they enjoy you (rice beer). The first five days are considered unclean for all birth and death ceremonies of the males while the first six days for the females. On the 5/6th of the delivery of a child, they perform Yupanthaba by offering materials such as paddy, salt singju (dish of green vegetables mixed with salt, chilly etc.) rotten fish garland, fan or basket. The ceremony of worshipping Sanamahi by the maibee (midwife of the locality) is conducted with the tairen leaves. It being over, they take the Singju Manipuri salad.

The terms Heijabot, Luhongba (marriage) apok Asha and Laitin thaba (connected offerings of articles to the forefather) are common to the Meitei and lois. According to them they are inter connected an interdependent without one, the others have no formality. The Hindunised Meitei have discarded rice-beer and sacrifice of animals while the lois still retain them. Exchange of gifts between the parties form an important feature of marriage among the Lois.

Death and obsequal ceremony— It is one of the peculiarities that the Loi more Particularly the Chakpas of Manipur Valley are accustomed to burning their dead bodies (although they are not initiated in to Hinduism) As per their uses they used to burn the dead bodies whether they are below 10 (ten) months or not. If a child is delivered from the womb of the mother without the knowledge of sex, burning must be necessarily observed. Only quite recently the Andro Lois have assimilated the practice of burying dead bodies of boys/girls below three months on account of their connection with the more advanced Meities. In such cases of death 1-3 days are considered uncleaned. Normally there is no difference of days between the old and Young for purpose of cleansing the house.

The dead body is kept for a while in a thatched Hut of Courtyard in case he dies in the house. There are separate cremation grounds for each Salai (sib) of the Loi communities. A separate burial far away from the normal grave is set apart for such deaths as in childbirth, suicide or impure souls who have been killed by accident or those who died unnatural deaths. The Women who died after divorce is cremated in a different place.

While the symptoms of death approach, the Andro Lois use a kind of Ceremonial cloth known as Nawong Phee which must be kept for 5/6 days to be hunged a different places. The death is dressed and armed with bows and arrows in order that he may be free from evil influence. The elderly people puts himself at the Head of funereal Procession; after him comes the corpse. Surrounding it are the priests of that particular or the son-in-law of that house and five men (four males) or six women (four females) who must take part in the mourning. The funeral pyre is erected and the corpse is placed upon it. While doing so, no change is made between the parts of the

bed where the head and sole use to be placed while lying in a working state. For the Chief of the village or persons of rank *Kairen Keijao* (A special type of coffin may be used by order of the King. After the corps has been consumed it is extinguished by water and then follows a most extra-ordinary feature which at the same time is certainly a very lengthy one known as Luphu Chanba (Lubone (Chanba = to dry) consists in collecting the bones by either a party of 5 men or 6 women with help of tong. Gathering up a portion of them they collect into a heap to which they give a semblance of a deceased human figure supposed to represent him/her with the help of a pure thread (unparched), Pitcher, clothes, etc. Then they proceed to place a screen near the cremation ground and under this is deposited the *luphou*. It is then fed rice, curry and Yu into the mouth. And old women must take the *luphou* on his back by the belly with the help of Nahong Phi. It is then carried to the burial ground by a party consisting of drummers, flute, fiddle players, holders of bow and arrow. The *manglen* is dug normally by the son-in-law. They must place in the grave a bundle of rice, one pot full of water and a pipe full of pukyu (roasted rice beer) over which they tied paya at one end. The grave is then filled up with earth and then they raise a mound of sticks and covered with an umbrella of seeds. Rice and curry are to be placed on this place. After proceeding a little from the cremation ground an old man should close the grave. It is considered important to place the Luphous (dry bones) in order of precedence; seniority in pretty much the same manner as thou while living on this earth. The luphou of the daughter in law must not be buried by the side of the father in law.

The party return to the house. The mesubi (old woman) takes a kind of fruit and all the people resent must take a green dish of vegetable mixed with salt and chilly. The son-in-law has to sprinkle the place with the help of tairen leaves which as every one of us knows are very common among them and even the Meitei Brahmans of Manipur. He takes the mangra (sweet potato). The maiba pours some mixture of egg mixed with kind of a leave upon all instruments, and fiddles which were used for carrying the corpse.11

With the bones the Lois used to bury things of daily use such as water pots, dishes, weapons, ornaments and mss wrapped in a kind of plantain leaves coated with he (a black varnish obtained from juice of a tree rowing in kabow valley). The practice of some silk lois of Manipur such as kameng, koudruk, etc.) is akin to that of Burma. These practices however magical and superstitious they may appear denote that they have preserved a most distinct type of the disposal of the dead, necessary rites for enabling the soul to have a higher state and prosperity.

Customary rites and festivals-It is of special interest to note that loi people are made into this world with definite rites and well defined institutions. Every adult member whether old or young, male or female must take part in the acquisition of materials such as pieces of bamboo,

timber, thatching grass, etc. in connection with the construction of socio-religious institution. There are various taboos connected with these. At Andro, Panam Ninghou's temple can only be opened on Sunday and repairs must also be done this day.

In case of repairs, or even entire rebuilding , the work must be completed entirely in one day. This rule is also applied in the cases of all the duties of the lois and some Meities. The singing of Chkparol (ancient song of the chakpa group), beating of khong (a kind of instrument) and use of pestle form an important item of the inauguration of any Loisong (institution). A wooden stool, wine jars, drums and five places for five important deities are to be specified in the temple. The space is divided in to two equal parts by an imaginary line-(1) the left side called Phamlel where the Khullakpa (village chief) takes his seat and right side where the Lupllakpa (next man to the chief) must take his seat. The title holders are under obligation to occupy their seats in order of precedence in an customary gathering. The major religious rites are the following-(I) to observe kurak Lam Taiba (offering not to visit cattle epidemic in the country. No cattle is let loose after this festival.) and to worship the presiding deities of market in Inga/May-June; (2) To worship the presiding deity of the concerned village in kalel/April-May; (3) To worship the presiding deity of four directions on Saturday of Lamda/Feb.-March; (4) To offer animal to god in Phairel/Jan-Feb; (5) To adore the corn deity in order to ward off the worms and insects in Hiyangei/Octo-Novem; (6) To offer cooked food and bee to the forefathers in Langban/August-Septem; (7) To celebrate the Lai Haraoba (Merrymaking of God) in Mera/Sep-Octo; (8) Repair of sacked huts and tamples and (9) To worship God Sorarel (Indra, the forefather) in Phairel and Lamta/from January to March yu Hongba (festival of rice beer) is special to the loo of Chap Flaying whereas the festival Noose 1,2,5, and 7 are common to all in all essential respects. The customary law enjoined the Andorra Los to observe some more festivals without fail such as ;-(1) Formal inauguration of the ceremony of digging clay for making pottery in Fairly January Feb. It consists in digging the earth (near the modern S.D.C. court) by the members of three Ningthouja family/royal family) of Andros namely Ningthoujam, Phanjoubam and Khunungmayum. (2) Kongba Leithong Phatpa (to dig the earth) and Sajibu Cheiraoba (new years' day) in March April. (3) Celebration of the Shraddha of God on every new moon/waning moon. Throughout the loo villages and elsewhere the lois (who are not yet Vaisnavised) reside, rice beer , pig, hen, and fruits are the feature of puja. The Andorra Loo was under obligation to attend the Kwak Tanba festival (Vijaya Dasami) of the king of Manipur by providing 4 earthen jars and flag for the king of Manipur .

We now come to the national festival of the Los known as Haraoba which is performed in the months of Lamba/Febru-March. and kalel /April May in honour of their respective deities. It has dominated the socio-

religious rites of the different communities all over the years. It lasts nearly 5 or 7 or 9 or 11 or 13 days in a year and is marked by colourful circular dances, song, social visits and competitions in wrestling. race , etc. It is traced to the origin of the cosmos and popularised by a host of Khullakpas.

The credit for involving three distinct types such as Andro Haraoba, Phayeng Haraoba and Laimaram Haraoba though they defer in details goes to these respective people " The Meities, Los and other communities alike worship a god in this form. Arrangements are made well ahead of times in the respective villages for celebrating it in the loo villages with the consent of the king and his pandit Loisang Nobody is allowed to enter the village during this festival. Should be any body enter, he would be assuredly be killed by the deity. The efficacy of rites enjoyed by the customary codes ends on correct procedure. Any slight deviation prescribed at every step is enough to render the deeds fruitless. Instances of consequence are not leading in the example given by my informance.

Considered from the standpoint of arts. the circular dance represents a group dance of males and females for the peace and prosperity of the land. A large number of males and females of all ages dance to gather, They de dress during the festival certain patterns (Hook like motifs) and prepare the designs by themselves. The bond of union is this rite although they lived in different areas under king of Manipur.

As artisan and manufacturing classes— The industry of the state until recently, a very lucrative one and it so happened that it (except weaving) is mainly the work of the loi groups. Most of them are connected with the preparation and sale of yu (Rice beer) The loi women used to make almost all their textile and article for daily use. Of these the following deserve notice—

1. Silk culture (i) Fayeng, Leimaram, Khurukhul Kaudruk, Andro. (ii) Pottery, making of pitchers for cooking and keeping water.
2. Andros, Chorine and Sugnu. (The story goes that the chakpas originated the task of making pitcher after the model of the fruit of Nura Khundong Leoi)
3. Iron-Kakching,
4. Salt-Sikhang, Ningal and Chandrkhong.
5. Fishing-Thanga, Ithing, Karang etc.
6. Wood Cutting Sugnu-Popularly called seloi to pay revenue or tax in the term of money.
7. House building-"-do-
8. Grass cutting for-The Visnupriyas or Mayang Kalichas
9. Boad making-Heorei Langang.

One who wishes to take to those manufacturing works must lose ones position and will become a Loi. Most of the Loi villages were enlisted in the lists prepared by the kings. The Presence of the root 'Loi' which is constantly used in the names of villages suggests that the people or the

villages were one of them. They were treated as unclean class because the customary practice of the state associated castes or social status with the nature of the various employment's (except agriculture) pursued by a concerned group. Their purposes was to supply to the king and his family their products which they had to specialise the works. The country had self-sufficient economy on account of resources such as silk trees, 12 salt mines/wells, iron ores, suitable clay for pots, trees and fish. It was unique in the past in possessing the groups who specialised in different industrial works. The process of manufacturing them cannot be written in this paper for want of space. Their knowledge's and training became a common one in Manipur and they were those useful classes maintained by the British Officers in their papers. monographs and tour-diaries. They proved competent artisans who made important contributions to industry, arts and crafts. They wrote treatises on their works for prosperity. The traditional state was and remained primarily military and aristocratic. The industrial questions which agitates now either did not exist in the state, or assumed so simple a form that these artisan classes did not rise to the surface of political life.

With the passage of time, they seldom follow the hereditary professions in order to qualify them for more prospective careers. The drawing and evaporation of salt water from the salt wells successful carrying out of iron works and silk products were accomplished in great quantities by these people as late as the time of IInd world war. They were highly priced in Burma and British India. But lack of patronage and voluntary efforts of the people for repair have brought about the ruin of these industries at present. But the salt springs in South Sekmai Ningel and Chandrakhong; Suitable clay for pottery in Andro and Chairel are still guarded by the people. 15 For customary and religious purposes, the Meiteies are very conservative and do not utilise the imported salts (*Kabo thum*) and pots uptil now. In most of the Hindu or pre-Hindu temples religious utsabs (festivals) and worship the local cake like Salts coming from the salt wells of the Loi and pots made by them are in sacred use.

A Brief Sketch of the Social and Political History

The Loi groups as we have been already seen can be distinguished from the Meiteis by their use of you (rice beer), Poultry, Pork, dark skin and snub nose. There have been infusions of Meitei bloods into their families by intermarriage and other methods such as loi by royal punishment, loi by voluntary marriage and loi by purchase. From chronicles it is clear that Arong, Harijol Hangul, Phongakchao, Chairel, Irengpan, Kumbi, Kamu, Thanga and sugnu were the places for penal settlement to which all classes of Political offenders were sent by the rulers of Manipur king Naothingkhong sought the help of the Andros and Sekmais in his political campaign. In the epic story of Khamba and Thoibi it is told that Chingkhuba, the crown prince exiled his only daughter, Moirang Thoibi to the place of Tamurakpa for her unwillingness to obey her father's

command for marriage with Nongban. Earlier a Meitei king, Punsiba by name, saved his life from the attack of the Moirangs by living under the protection of the Andro lois in the latter's village. Until recently no person from Moirang is allowed to enter Andro Village. The king in his turn blessed the Andro lois; visitors to the village of Andro to-day see a lake, called Sanapat named after the king of Manipur and the extension of Andro gave itself to the cult of worship of great Meitei king. King Khagemba (1597-1652 A D) initiated the practice of making use of the Loi villages as place of transportation of prisoners and social offenders for he is thought to have sent war captives of the neighbourhood of Maram in the north., to Sugnu in 1645 (40 miles to be south of Imphal). He also defeated a large Chinese force and was not hesitant to admit to admit the prisoners of war at his will to be loi groups. They introduced silk industry in Manipuri. His successor took bold steps and accepted war captives into the fold of loi groups by allotting cultivable lands to them, King Khulachaoba (1652-1666) exiled a number of Manipuries, who, under the leadership of the Angom Ningthou (chief of Angom clan) revolted against him to Ithai. He had further troubles with some loi villages for he is recorded as having sent expeditious against Andro, Sikhong (salt manufacturing area) and Yairipok, all of which remain the names now-days.

Then came the rule of king Pamheiba alias Garibniwas (1709-1748), who with the connivance of Shantidas Adhikari (a Ramandi preacher from Sylhet in East Bengal) introduced revolutionary changes and prosecution in religion. A great number of people who opposed his regime and change of belief were ordered to go into excel to live in the loi villages for the rest of life. In addition to these, various other causes grew up from time to time. By the time of King Joi Singh (1759-1798) members of different groups were forbidden to intermarry, eat together, or associate freely, and the higher castes could not even dine together on or eat food that had been prepared by a person of lower Sagei/class. From the 18th centuries to the beginning of the 20th Century such strictures were observed with particular punctiliousness by the Rajkumars, Brahmies, Kshatriyas and persons of higher strata, Brahmins, Kshatriyas and persons of higher strata, , who would rather starve to death than eat food that come from the hands of the Tribals, Scheduled Castes and degraded persons and hence was ritually defiled. Perpetual degradation of prize, or a common to a loi group may be caused by such trifling matters such a negligence of an official duty, practising black/high worship and attempt for the throne. If an unhappy or un-approved act becomes known to king, the offender is outcasted and treated as a loi. The loi villages had participated in the revolts of aspiring princes against the rulers. Maharaja Chandrakiriti (1834-1844 and 1950-1986) destroyed the lois of Andro and Chandrokhong in Imphal east sub-division in connection with their involvement's in the revolt of Irengba Thundangba in 1881. The revolt was suppressed by the king with the help of British and the leaders of the loi villages who styled themselves as Prime

Minister, Governors, Head worshippers of deities under Eringba were cruelly massacred. Thereafter, the lois were not so Politically active.16 During the British regime and shortly before we find Koireng Jubaraj son of King Chandrakirty challenging the British imperialism. He was exiled in the island of Thanga for some time by the order of Sir James Johanstone, the then Political Agent of Manipur. Such is the case with Yubaraj Bodhachandra Singh (afterward the Maharaja of Manipur) for his refractoriness against his farther, Maharaja Churachand Singh. He was expelled from the country and was to go into exile in Banaras for some months. The defeated armies of the revolting princes were sometimes commuted to exile in a loi village instead of killing. The social aspects concerning the loi group had a more interesting background. The increase of population is ascribed to the penalties of the king when the obstinate Meiteis violate the rule of customary rites and scriptural injunctions. The rules served the purpose of sharp weapons for the unruly people. There can be no marriage between two families of the Yek (origin of family or tribe) ; some Sairuk tinnaba (persons of different surnames who are the progenies of the same mother or grand mother but of different fathers or grandfathers), Putinnaba (having the same forefather, etc. There is further the ostracism disallowing marital relation on account of the taboo of blood relationships. The people were afraid of being sent to Coventry under the kings' system. There were various classes of degraded loi Meities; (1) Haojongban loi for marriage with the person of the same yek, sister-in-law, etc., (2) Shamupan for marriage with a Brahman lady against the Hindu Manipuri injunctions and (3) Palel and Langathel; for tabooed addresses or for marriage with the person related as the mother or aunt. The entire class is denounced by the king and the concerned couple was excommunicated by the Meitei Society. The punishment to the class may be reviewed and revoked by an act of kings' mercy in course of time but the unfortunate couple were irrevocable. The exile is extended to the monkeys which stole into nicely decorated palaces of the king and kakphei (leech) which was found in the sacred garland.

Yaithibi-A section of the outcaste comprising those persons penalised by the kings of Manipur for violating the marital regulation, looting the jewels of the royal family in times of war. Such a person is called Yaithibi for having married a woman related as his mother and younger sister. This group is the most degraded one in the estimate of Manipuri Society. They speak Manipuri language in their own flavour. The difference between other kinds of the loi and the Yaithibis is that while the former can be designated as the Kshatriyas after a purification ceremony, the latter was on inexpiable one; a case of eternal degration. Their descendants were maligned by the people as they would be traitor who brought the ruin of the country. They dressed themselves in black clothes. Their original habitats are Waithou Mapal in Thoubal Sub-Division and Kamu Yaithibi in Imphal east. The Manipuri rigidity towards them has passed into a proverb as sin.

When Maharaja Churachand showed no sympathy for their aspiration to become a Hindu it seemed as though it must be the end. They have not the same status that the Harijans had in other parts of India as we know from the resolutions of Manipur State Darbar such an isolated position continued till the dawn of Gandhian Philosophy in the middle of the 20th Century. Mass conversion of them into the Meitei fold took place under the initiative of Kakching unit of congress party and Pandit Lalita Madhob sarma, an active member of Indian National Congress . They constructed a Hindu temple in their village. The Manipuri Brahmans of Kakching acted as priests to these converted people. There was an agitation among the Congress Volunteers to throw open the royal temple of Sri Govindaji to the Yaithibis in 1948 when changes were taking place with great rapidity.

An important different area arose in 1959 which had some consequences in the temple of Krishnachandraji in Kakching. On Sep. 14th of 1959 about 500 youths of Kakching and Yaithibi along with the Top leader of Manipur Congress dined together in the Yaithibi village. The Brahman priest of Kakching did not approve of the step and his group stood aloof from it by refusing to act as priests of those having connection with the feast without a purificatory act. Thinking that their harasmant is a violation of law the Congress holi party performed the Sangkirtan in the temple by over powering the orthodox people. The priest brought the forcible entry of the temple to the notice of the Maharaja and his Brahma Sabha which exalted the old practice and made the defilement of the temple into the law of the place. The help of the law court was invoked by the priest and the Sabha, but argument and replies of the progressive minded people of Kakching seemed to have convinced the judges of the disintegrating practice. The priest and the sabha lost the case. At any rate, the enmity and question of purity persists for considerable periods and thereby forming an obstacle to the cause of the Yaithibies/Harijans of Manipur.

In the past the same Loi was attached to grass cutting grouping by the king known as the Vishnupreiya who are scattered all over areas of Cachar, Tripura and Bangladesh after 1819 in addition to their stronghold in Vishnupur, Ningthoukhong, Nagaikhong near the Loktak Lake. The visnupria out side Manipur come into conflict with Meities and had moves for their separate identity and culture.

Methods for the Lois for voluntary conversion into Manipuri Hinduism–

The formal initiation of the Lois into Manipuri Hinduism is known as *Pana Thokpa*. In the old days royal games and competitions were open only to the members of four panas (divisions). The custom excluded from royal games the Brahmans and the Lois even through the Muslims were allowed to do so. By Pana Thokpa we mean the group which is allowed to rise to the pana system by order of the King. It is the duty of the King's pandit Loisang to examine the origin and social status of the Loi group. The Lois

can be admitted by the Society provided that they can prove themselves to belong to one of the higher Hindu castes, i.e., those from whose hands the Brahmans may take water such as the Gowala. The lower castes are not in theory admissible but the discretion of the King pertaining to the issue is final. The Loi villages which have originated as penal settlements have a better claim and status than that of other classes. They always wait for a chance of asserting their fidelity to Manipuri Hinduism. As for the artisan Loi group, the person acts as a *Cheithaba* (year releaser) for a year as a pre-requisite for getting his claim approved by the King and admitted into the Meithei community. If the King is satisfied with their progress towards the conversion process. probation takes place under some Meitei elders. They should discard food habits such as pork, chicken and drink although they involve in serious loss of their distillation and domestic industry. The rites of admission cover ceremonial ablution, painting of sacred tilak mark on the forehead, investiture of sacred thread and tulasi garland—all accompanied by the recitation of mantras from a presiding priest. The Manipuri Brahmans from a village may minister to a particular Loi group in respects of Hindu rites and manners.

A family or a whole village may be subsequently recognised as the Meiteis by the authority of the king. The converted people have to live with the Meiteis after taking a new surname and Yek (clan). They are not at once accorded the full privilege and position since men of the same yumnak (surname) will not eat ordinarily with them. Some of the Lois may be adopted as their family members in a well-to-do-class. The Loi groups wanted to enlist them as Manipuri Kshatriya during the census operation of the British regime. But the caste Hindu Manipuris in shocking states looked down upon their claim, without having any association with them. But this conversion gave us singers, scholars, rulers etc. During the reign of the Maharajas their social position was one of great humiliation. By the treatment which they received from the King and his Brahman Sabha being as shown above, they are led by Christian missionaries to embrace Christianity. By this time Reverend William Pettigrew a missionary of A.B. Mission went on preaching tours among the Tangkhul Nagas but found little response. He adopted Purum Singh of Fayeng loi village as his son; he is the first man to become a Christian and soon after this his family members also became Christians. From this time and up till this year we find that most of the hill tribes become the Christians of different missions. Pettigrew-"Reverend W. Pettigrew Saheb Padri" is the respectable title that has been bestowed on him and his follower Purum Singh wrote books in triple languages, taught the Christian gospels in tribal vernaculars, rendered free medical service and spread western system of education in the remotest corners of the State. To them the Scheduled tribes/castes owe the beginnings of their civilisation. At present young boys and girls of some Loi villages such as Andro, Fayeng, Waithou Mapal, Heirok are won to Jesus, often they would in turn witness in their homes and win their family

members. They new converts say Christians of the valley would settle outside the village of kinsmen and set up a new Christian village of their own. They celebrate Christmas's festivals and decided for the Christian practices and ways of life by incorporating Christian gospels into them

Many Schools of missionaries conducted their works in the valley and hill areas. They saw that the social structures offered a chance of converting the Kwatha Lois living in the tiny Kwatha village of Manipur's Tengnoupal district. They had much to do with obtaining for us the materials for old traditions, link with the King of Pong, ancient Meitei scripts and betel nut culture. The chiefs of this village in the latter part of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century made names on tantric lores, mantras, etc. They are respected by Yubaraj Bir Tikendrajit (1880-1891) and Maharajah Churachand of Manipur (1891-1941) by taking laiwas (tantric Buddhist mantras) from them. It became a customary practice with every ruler and king of Manipur to specialise in mantras to prove his fitness for the administration of the State.

The people of Kwatha village are thought to be an offshoot of the Andros. From the tour diary of the President, Manipur State Darbar Dated May-June, 1918, we know that these people though not Buddhists are apparently on very good terms with the Buddhist monk (Phungy) of the Burmese border and hold him in respect and actually built a portion of the Kyang (temple). Their backwardness is evident from the facts that the Kwatha people has only one lower primary school with only 15 students. They have not been able to produce a single matriculate on account of poverty and lack of communication; their concentrated habitat in an isolated area not linked up by the net-work of state transport.

Besides cultivation, the main occupation of the villages (about 150 Population) include fishing, hunting and growing of betal nuts. There is neither a govt. officer nor a government employee among them. The number of householders between per capita income of Rs. 1 to 1100 is only 21; No H.H 28 and H.H. Size, 153 according S.C. Household Servey 1981. The factor contributing to their shrinkage is also the problem of marriage outside their small community specially the girls. They are generally married to the tribal girls from the nearby hills.18

More about their customary laws-The Loi groups, because of their isolation differed from the Meitei laws in some points, such as the system of arranging marriage and dowry. For outward appearances they wear sacred thread and garland of tulasi beads. The King of Manipur issued the order allowing them to do so. Intermarriage between the Loi groups and the Meiteis was common in the past although such alliance was prohibited by Vaisnava ideas and Hindu law. Like the Meiteis the loi villages and classes were divided into 7 clans and intermarriage took place among them if the industry was identical. A silk village generally married among themselves. The Lois of salt making villages would intermarry, but it is rare that they would go to a silk village for wives nor that Fayeng (silk Loi) would give

them girls. The children born to a Loi woman by a Meitei man were capable of legitimisation provided the formalities were sanctioned by the King. Every girl was and is allowed, when a child, to earn her private property. She is allowed to get all of them as her dowry at the time of going to the husband's place. The usual rule of inheritance is that youngest son gets the house and land, but moveable property is divided among the sons.

It is difficult to say whether they are the Hindu Manipuris or not. Being weak in numerical strength and scattered throughout the suburbs areas they were naturally influenced to a considerable extent by the Hindunised Meiteis of the valley.

Socio-Political Organisation

The immigrant Loi groups were treated kindly by the kings of Manipur who allowed them to settle in their villages and permission to live according to their customary laws. There is sufficient evidence to prove that some of the Loi villages like Chairel, Chakpa Fayeng, etc. were once powerful kingdom under their independent rulers. Their territories extended in different directions and embraced the nearby villages and hill areas. Gradually they were subdued by the Ningthouja forces. Inspite of their attempts to help the revolt of the princes Manipur remained comparatively free from the atrocities and crimes against the minority communities. In their relations with the rulers of Manipur, the kings conferred the rank of a chief (khullakpa) on the village head with privileges entitling each head of a Loi village to social and political honours such as the right to use costly rewards of the king, to use *Khamen Chatpa* (Printed silk dhoti) and customary ornaments, to preside over the functions and to have seats in the royal court. Whenever troubles broke out in frontier areas two posts; some posts may be omitted or added according to the necessity of the village. The Chief of some villages such as Chairel and Heirok is styled as Ningthou (King). There is an additional post known as Senapati in some villages settled by the Keis and some groups. The head of salt manufacturing villages assume the title of Hanjaba and were under the care of Thumjaorengba (overseers of salt). The appointment of the head of Kakching (centre of iron manufacturing industry) with the style and title of Buddhiraj) dates from the reign of King Charairongba (1697-1709). The lois have to attend to the Kings' Lalup System (11 days' compulsory attendance in the Court) under the Seluagba/Secretary of the rulers of Manipur. Some Loi Villages were exempted from Lalup as special cases. The royal offices which control the specific activities of the Loi were Singjabi, Thubanddong, Telli Leisang, Humairoi Loi sang Laikhom Sang incharge of war booty) and Yaithibi Loisang (for the Yaithibis) Indwelling. Such as the Burmese border, hill areas with in the country and border areas with the western Countries. Their assistance and service were involved and requisitioned. The respective head of the Loi villages had to supply the king with their products such as jars, charcoal, silk, fruits etc. in lieu of their assistance in the state. The socio-political organisation of Loi villages is a

powerful one consisting of the following titles and offices such as– (1) Khullakpa, (2) Luplakpa, (3) Khanjahanbas, (4) Khabam Lakpa, (5) Yupanbio (Manager of rice beer), (6) pakhasulskps, (7) Neharkpn (controller of Youths), (8) Wingol laipa (controller of virgins), (9) Maibi (priestess), (10) Lai Maibi (god's attendant) (11) Selungba, (12) Loumi Lakpa, (13) Loumi hidang (14) Khabam Lakpa, (15) Toloi Hidang, etc. As per the available records those has been a continues succession of 20 Khullakpas (villages chief) each for earth Sekmai and Fayeng up to 1979. There is variety in their posts. We can find hereditary functions as well as elections amongs the offices. In some villages the same man holds two after Indian independence and when Manipur becomes a part of Indian Union, the Monarchy along with the ancient form of administration came to an end, Forever the Loi communities became the honoured citizen of Manipur and the title holders of the Loi villages continue to enjoy the customary and social privileges though in a modified manner.

In the context of Mandal Commission

Social justice is the need of the hour. It is being approached and advocated by Mandal commission and the several measures of the Government of India. Mandal Commission submitted its report to the Government during the Prime Minister ship of V.P. Singh and attempts to provide social justice to the so-called weaker section and backward classes. The Commission was charged with dragging the members of the forward class.

The implication of the issues has been discussed in many forums and discussion in Manipur. The Manipur Government by its order dated 20/7/93 constituted a three member Committee and its recommendations were approved on 1.9.94. However, persons born in all groups of Manipur, viz. Meitei Rajkumar, Brahmans, common people whether Vaishnaves or Sanamahi, Muslims Teli, Nepalese living in the recognised Loi villages have been categorised as O.B.C. by the Government.

The people of Kakching have been designated as a scheduled caste group by the certificate of authority from the D.C./Thoubal District. The validity was challenged by the Loi community of Imphal under the leadership of Biren Singh, MLA, in the Gauhati High Court. By verdict of the court, the order was declared null and void.

The Lois And Yaithibis At Present

The practice of pollution, untouchability in the Social barrier was finally brought to an end by the Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. Whatever be the stigma, intermarriage and interning are now becoming the rule among all communities of this land.20 Also the western style of Government, the development of communication and opening of new market all had their results upon the loi or backward way of life. Within last 40 years the way of life on the part of the weaker section were considerably modified to suit the corresponding progress of human thinking. Under

modern conditions they are rising. The younger groups are devoted to modern education and entered state Service as teachers, Lecturers, doctors civil servants police and military people. As political consciousness grew so did their sense of identity, the differing section received political representation in State Assembly and village elections.21 One late Sekmai Chaoba, an elected member from the scheduled caste constituency became the cabinet minister in a number of times.

Schedule castes commission of the Govt. of India 1973 has investigated into their problems in accordance with the provisions of constitution. One of the their findings based on investigation was that the scheduled castes were not discriminated against by the higher castes. The name of social disability is but for want of a turn to differentiate the anti nomians in society. The enlisted groups took advantage of the facilities in matters relating to reservation in service under the Government and semi-government institutes. But it has largely failed to find a answer to the problem of the unlxisted weaker communities of Kwatha village. A turning point was the establishment of a state department for development of tribals and backward classes with the objection of economic development and social upliftment in these areas. The component plan for 1980-85 that caused the state Govt. to push up the level of poor families and implementation of 20 point programmes must have to show signs of being fulfilled.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I am constrained to note that awareness and voluntary efforts on their part will lay the foundation for a great future. Their cultures has by no means disappeared in a sense. Of late there has been a revival of the culture and literature consistent now with the changing conditions. The temptation of drinking liquor is weakened by the prohibition movement and social welfare programmes of the people. In 1951 when the Luplakpa of North Sikmai sacrificed animals before the deity they worshipped in Loi Haraoba there was an agitation from certain section of the people.

The loi community in the past have made a contribution for good or evil to the composite Manipuri culture. They can be justly proud of the Chaithbas (Year releaser) and persons of occult power. The astrologers and physician of the Loi are those according to whom the age of the person is found out from the number of Cheithabas and Manipuri method of predictions and not from the consultations of horoscopes and Bengali texts. 23 The Meitei mind was already governed by the fine contributions of them such as the fiddle of chakpa Tinsang, the exceptionally beautiful silk cloth (Mugarel of the chakpa women). juice of Chakpa Heikru (embolic myrobalm) and fine clay pottery of the Andros. The manuscript illustrations from Kwatha and Khamran villages were phenomena known to the Chinese.24 They have not only changed the dialects but also their inspiring social education programmes, Philologist, Social anthropologist, etc. must

realise the fact that their dialects are indispensable from anybody who wishes to do research in their culture of the present as well as of the past.

There was a time when unmarried girls of loi villages (like the Meiteis and tribals) had to pass their cold nights for learning spinning and Social values from the elder women. The manner in which they received training in Sinai sang inspired praise among the people and is still fresh in our memory. We suggest that some aspects of their culture are relevant and should be applied to the task of bridging the difference between theory and practice, and work and education.25 Their folk songs, dance crafts and prayers are remarkable. Their own people must take upon themselves to study them and faster them through voluntary organisations. For the great future, an atmosphere of creativeness and awareness is highly essential.

Notes and references

1. R.K. Dorendra Singh the Chief Minister (1980-81) of Manipur mooted the idea of treating caste Hindu Manipuries as scheduled caste in order to get the facility of the Govt. of India. The issue has been discussed in public meetings discussions, debates and writings. The approval of the centre is not yet known at present.
2. Dr. M. Kirti Singh, Religious Development in Manipur, Imphal, 1980,PP.86-88.
3. The Royal chronical 'Cheitharol Kumbaba' sheds enough light on this point.
4. Information obtained from Pandit Ng. Kulachandra Singh a noted scholar well versed in Maitie Lores and Loi Culture.
5. The Manipuris MS written-in Meitei script called Chakpa Khunda Khunthaklon vividly described this point in detail.
6. Linguistic survey of India, Vol III Part III, Section on the Lois, PP-. Also file No. 303 dated Imphal the 22nd July, 1922 of the Manipuri Secretariats Library, Imphal.
7. Vide my book ' Manipuri Samaj Hougatlakpa amusing Chaokhatlokpa (Origin and evelopment of the Manipuri Society) Imphal 1977,PP-24-26. The section on the lois is the result of my research and long field work study of the Andro Lois, Fayeng, etc. The project was taken up at the instance of late Dr.S.K. Chatterjee, National Professor of India in Humanities.
8. Thokchom Raja Maibi, Langol, Imphal 1977, PP-85-90; Also the collection of Mutua Museum, Keisampat, Imphal.
9. T.C. Hodson The Meiteis., Calcutta latest edition, Section on the religion; J. Shakespeare, The religion of Manipur, P 420.
10. Field work in the temple of Panam Ningthou, presiding deity of Andro Loi from 1969 to 1983.
11. Late Pandi Achoube M. Chandra Singh's Chakoparol may be consulted for this description, further the materials owe much to the help rendered

to the author by Pandit Ng. Kulachandra Singh of Govindaji temple Board, Imphal, Aseibam Mukta Singh Physician-cum-Astrologer of Andro Village and Mutua Bahadur Director of Mutue Museum, Imphal.

12. Late Pandit M. Chandra Singh, Chakparol, Imphal 1972, PP-13-25.
13. Ibid; The author's experiences have been made use of
14. Vide the Souvenir for Manipuri Loi Haraaoba festival held in Imphal from 19th October to 27th October, 1973. The most interesting and widely discussed paper by the elders of these communities are found in the pages.
15. Weaving is a castles and classless occupation in Manipur from the Loi classes to the members of the royal family every one gives equal dignity to weaving. There are patterns of embroidery said to be invented by the loi of chakpa andros etc.
16. My observation.
17. Field work conducted in Thoubal Khunou in October November 1970.
18. Vide Amrita Bazar Patrika, English Daily P.10 of July '7' 82
19. T.C.Hodson op. Cit. pp. 72-75; Document No. 15 (English Translation of the Maharaja of Manipur) to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Dated July, 20, 1881.
20. CP. I have seen the die hards of conservative minded Generation in religious and social gatherings. The concept of cleanliness and uncleanness in an extreme way was developed by a class of uncompromising Vaisnavas called the Pangots among the Meiteis in the beginning of the 20th Century.
21. I was posted as a presiding Officer in polling booth of the schedule caste constituency in Khurkhul in 1970. I have visited most of the loi villages and collected relevant information from elderly people while in election duty.
22. Vide the proposal of the Annual Plan 1983-84 and Draft special component plan 1983-84 of the Department of Tribals and backward classes, Govt. of Manipur.

11

MANIPURI FAMILY IN THE LIGHT OF NEW APPROACHES TO LIFE

Introductory Back Ground

An honourable attempt is made on the settled way of the Meitei life, Nature of Meitei family and institution of marriage and related forms in the context of Manipuri Religion and Society Poiba means wild or roaming without any fixed habitation and Yumlingba and Meiringba (to open a fixed dwelling place and preserving fire in the house) and marriage means security, enjoyment and undisturbed continuation of family life. The cessation of Nomadic life (associated with waves of nomadic people-Umanglai Forest deities as their leader, Aryan Kassaits, Mitanese etc.) and beginning of a settled life is originated by Lord Koubru, Khoyum Ingouba and His wife Nura Panthoibe. The Meitei people swayed by the ethics of fidelity to the household-life continuance of family life, increase of population, etc. invented myths and stories to show that the important Meitei deities like Yoiren Pakhangba, Sanamahi and Koubru initiated the family life and marriage. It was an obligation for a person to enter the family and continue the life by following the tradition and decree of their deities-" Do as the Gods or ancestors did. " Any person who did not conform to the same verdict was frowned by society and has to undergo the rite of Chup Shaba which required his relatives to offer some Puja Materials and incantations to the Sun God after his or her death with a prayer so that such misfortune might not occur again.

There are verses, chapters and texts in the holy *Puyas* which call upon every Meitei householder to build a house with 9 rooms (for the elderly people, young-males and females), to set apart 3 places/foot stool of God Sanamahi, Goddess Leimerel Shidabi and Phunga Lairu (hearth, preservation of fire with iron tripod and husks, worshipping them in private houses with burning incense, lamp and in a more ceremonious way with fruits, flowers and rice on Cheiraoba/Meitei New years day and Lamdai Thangja (a Saturday in Manipur month called Lamda/about March.)

As regards the emphasis on householders stage it is held that King Sentreng Apanba committed his cour Pandit Khullen Ngamba in connection with the satisfaction of seeing his descendant for the throne. The advice of the Pandit who happened to be a confirmed bachelor would appear unworthy on such matters. One must practise what one suggested. Court Pandit Khulenngamba himself searched his brides afresh and married 2 sisters namely Sangkhulemba and Yaibireima (mother of Sanarembi and

Cheishra-personifications of Daivi and Asuri Sampad, divine and demoniac nature in the belief).

Patterns of Progeny rites

A typical Meitei family consists of husband, wife, some children and parents. The structure is expanded when it consists of additional members, relations, married sisters who became divorces or widows) and servants in the household of a well-to-do family. Without children a family has no reality for all purposes. On the basis of relationship a Meitei family is characteristically polygynious although monogamy is an ideal, matrilineal, patriarchal, patrilocal, individual as well as joint on structural organisation. There are cases where a husband had more than a wife for begetting his child. The princes and nobles had more than one wife. The treatise on sickness and cure contains hymns, rites embodying the incantation used by the co-wives which show the feuds, discordant family and evil intentions. The prevailing atmosphere is that they follow different rites, charms, incantations, herbs, etc. under the guidance of Maibas, Maibis and medicine men. There are a number of pre-Hindu and Hindu methods which are supposed to be effacious in blessing the couples with child through worship of forefathers (generation) in the month of Lanban September-October, worship of Oknarel of Lamangdong (present Ningthoukhong Bazaar), worship of important Umanglais during the Haraoba festival, worship of Pole star with fruits, flowers, pan, money, banana having odd number and a piece of cloth. In later Phases of religious thought, we found worship of the Mahadeva of Thongam Mondum, Kwarok Mahadeva and Aram Nityananada on auspicious timings with prescribed Puja materials. One prescribed remedy against Apumba Shoirel /evil sprit in the form the worship with piece of stones and fried peaseis quite common among the people. The materials are Charmed with the chanting of in annotations by the ritual specialists. Various problems of family life viz. hymns barrenness, preventions of conceptions, causing impotency, misfortune to a co-wife, enchantment of a person of equal age, causing of menstruation, abortion, prevention of miscarriage, locking vagina when the husband was away from home; opening of the same by him through incantation and pujas seem to have been their concern. The benevolent Gods were called upon to protect the family against these troubles. We met with the working out of horoscopes, use of amulets and practice of charm.

The ancient Meiteis took recourse to the care of his body in sleep, eating and sitting postures in their life time. Infanticide a practice common with some primitive tribals of Chakpi karong/Tengnoupal district) is not known to the Meitei people. Early society encouraged proper care of the deformed, aged and mentally defective persons. Professional begging was not sanctioned by society before the coming of Hinduism although it was growing to be wide spread in later period. Recently wide spread use of gynaecological treatment, testing in clinics and test tube methods had led to the decline of traditional rites.

Basis of Meitei family

In their belief continuance of the line by a son is the basis of a family. Absence of a male child in a family is considered to be the end of the lineage, The birth of a son is obligatory for a Meitei family in view of his social and religious implications. This is a belief and attitude of every parent irrespective of how high or low (Including the ruler and nobles) rich and poor that the birth of a female child or a parent having female children only is considered to be a bad luck. The same shows the difference between the Manipuries and non-Manipuries. Proper care of the child and love between the husband and wife give arise to family.

Preference for male to the daughter has remained virtually unchanged. 80% of the parents said that they hopes for a boy child.

Function of Meitei Family

In their codes the family is the organisation for perpetration of the race and regulation of relationship. The Meitei family performs most of the Biological, Economical, Educational and religious functions, many of which due to modern forces has undergone considerable changes, up to 1951 each family was more less a miniature workshop for Agricultural and economic produce. They undertook the responsibilities of meeting the needs through cultivation, various type of labour and Handloom, Weaving works with the parents or elderly person as Directors. The people in tribals and rural areas don't maintain the family budget income and expenditure. It was also the centre of learning social behaviours, discipline, cultural values and religious education's viz. worship of Sanamahi, Leimarel and *phuga* (Faire places) and son god in appropriate times and places in a house (not to be defiled by our food and impure things) and values of teaching proverbs/riddles/fables. The man was in conservative house used to observe daily rites and observe festivals as far as practicable. It is maintained that the intelligent personality, moral and non-moral character of person are best provided by their parents in home and not by any other groups. The family name/ surname and status of a father/mother are determining one's status and prestiges. As mark of respects of their ancestors or family they put the surname first and his personal name after that. Now a days the individual states is more valuable then the family status or surname. The Meiteis fail remain the only approved centre for ceremonious conduct address, by a grown up person. An experienced man well versed in rites and traditions is held in height esteem even though his house is economically bad. They learnt from house the sense of brotherly feeling, universal brotherhood a system of addressing an elder by polite expressions Tada, Tai-Ibungo, Yambung, Mama, Ipu, Ibuddou, Iche (elder sister) ima (mother), according to their seniority and to a younger one as Inao, Ibungo, Ibema and so on. It is exposed by the blood relationship words. The young never calls an elderly name by his or her actual name and are contempt about conduct A wife never calls her husband by name. Same case is effected in the case of

higher officer to the subordinate. Violation of this norm is an offence loading to loss of temper and assault of the one who is responsible for it. It should not be confused with the ignorance of biological paternity reported of groups of the central Australians and Trobiland, Islanders and the classificatory system-a naming system by which members of the same groups are addressed as a husband and wife. Learning good manners and discipline in a Meitei house is voluntary and springing from their own will. My experience confirms that there is a significant deterioration of this.

System-/ Value pattern in urban and rural families as the family solidarity and authority are disturbed by modern T.V. and seen laristic ideas. The methods purposely devised by the eldest male/female members for securing good health, long life and religious devotion, e.g. Mode of having rooms for each member; good habits in the day time and evening, postures of sitting and sleeping. As means of self culture, these sayings are rules in a family having great values.

Rituals and Ceremonies Associated with the Life Cycle

Birth rites of Meiteis such as delivery, Shastipujah on the 6th, days, Yumsengba (purification), naming, Chaumba (Food giving ceremony), etc., are not observed the modern people in the same as in traditional way in the fifties by sixties. Delivery with local midwifes (Maibis and Mayoknabies) and sometimes with Physician/specialists In mantras and medicine), cutting of the unbilical cord by the Maibeis with Wakthou (a kind of sharp edgeds bamboo) introduced by (a Maiti, called Wanphakpi) buruil of the *naopham*/cord, halfs of the Brahman priest or a priest of the Pre-Vaishanvite cult for Swasti-Pujah, offering of the baby to the Sun God by the Maibi with prayers were observed in the pat. Changes have occurred at every level among every use in this pattern. The maibi/midwife is no longer consulted for delivery although she is engaged for some ritual purpose. Delivery in the Hospital with the help of Doctors and nurses and artificial feeding is commonly practised owing to modern Soceio economic set-up. Swastipujah and name/food giving ceremonies are observes in the more expensive way with refreshment programme of teas, snacks wine, chicken and other items of food. Reference of marriage rites as elaborated in the following paragraph. Ritual observance in the case of death rites starting with cremation at a month place, river bank, shradha and annual shradha/phiroi are done in an elaborate manner with the offering of Garland of currency notes, clothes, and sumptuous prasadams, is based on prestige or Ijat of the Meitei families however the belief grow, in them to shorten the ritual observance of disvosa (1 day after shraddhas), annual Shraddhas ceremony (without the expenditure expensive singing partly)and immersion of the ashes of the deceased person by the member in a river in Manipur itself and not in tirtha. It is to be remarked that yo/rice bear is a pre-requisite for the performance of rites by the scheduled caste (Lois), Scheduled tribe families and the Manipuries also before the introduction of Vaishnavisim in he 18th, Century. The Government and all sections of

people are quite conscious of the effects of using rice beer and use of it in the rites of primitive relations.

Marriage

Stabilities of marriage is guarantied as in done to day though customary law religious sacraments and social honour for marital statues. It is an elaborate affair combining as they do pre-Hindu rites with Hindus and Western concepts. Monogamy is the rule but the higher classes had many wives widow marriage is permitted; child marriage is not formed since it is done only after puberty. Marriage within the same yek or gotra and Sairuk Tinnaba (among persons who are of the same mother but of different fathers) is prohibited by the traditional system of society. The marriage of Brahman bridegroom with Kshatriya, Vaisya or Sudra groom in Gandharva form of marriage has social sanction. Marriage between cousins and their children were admitted in society. There is no bar to intermarriage between a Meitei/Manipuri male and a tribal female although not encouraged by the orthodox circles. Marriage between Meitei Hindi and the Muslim is not approved by society under the Hindu rulers of Manipur. Excommunication and exile in different Loi/Scheduled caste villages viz. Hajongpan, Langathel, Palel, Shamupal, Sugnu, Thanga, etc. In the 18th and 19th centuries Manipuri society recognised 8 forms, of Hindu marriage although Brahmya and Gandharva forms are popular among them. The mantras uttered by the Brahmanas/priests are in Sanskrit. The parties did not utter them and know the meaning. But the tribal Christians of Manipur during the British regime solemnising it in a language which they understood. In Meitei Marup or revivalist groups, rites of marriage take place in chaste Meitei language since 1950. Divorce is allowed under reasonable conditions. The instances are very rare as marriage is not a civil contract. Families union had its dignity and beauty.

Trends in Marriage since IInd Word War

Marriage has witnessed and undergone changes/development in the form of registration in law court, marriage solemnisation with video films, cars, vehicles and dowry items. Some aspects of Manipuri marriage go back over a thousand years-initiation from the grooms side, fixing of auspicious timing by astrologers, pre-marital formalities (Heijapot), construction of marriage pavilion, Sankirtan walking 7 times round the groom, Ushin (releasing fish for divination) placing of garland, joining of hands with customary presents, exchange of kangsubi (sweet prepared form black mustard), conducting the bride in an elephant/Dolai (chariot carried by 6 persons) and post marital rites etc. At present there is strong stress on marriage between persons of equal status, ranking, academic qualification, different specialisation, etc. The aim of early Meitei marriage was those of fostering links among the kings, royal families, chiefs of different clans on political grounds. Marriage during the times of Maharajas and up to the time of merger of Manipur in 1949 was governed by the concepts of high

classes (Rajkumars and Brahmans) and Hidakphu Fida Tinnaba (joint chilam/ Hooka), through 8 forms of Hindu marriage. Marriage was ensured by match makers/duti/go between in the royal family and locality. This practice filtering down from the higher to the lower is different from the informal modern counterparts-matrimonial advertisements in the daily papers and magazines and matching by computer in so far its role is humanitarian and rational in conducting querries about family lineage, qualifications and arrangement of matches with the knowledge of the guardians. Meetings usually took place during the Likol (cowry)indoor games very popular in Meitei society in the past, communial dance, festivals like Thabal chongba (a folk dance performed by the Youths by joining hands in the moonlit night), Shri Panchami, Shri Krishna Janma Astami in which the parties signalled their affairs. There has been a growing trend in love marriage, interstate, inter caste marriage by discarding the orthodox conventions on account of modern education and secular principles. At present love marriage between the persons of some qualification or different lines/posts by dispensing with time honoured practice and love marriage, by changing their yekes (clan/group) with the approval of the Pandit Loishang. Love marriage between the parties (inspite of their being Brahman ladies, and the same Manipuri surname) exceeded those of arranged and orthodox marriage. This trend implies that the parties have started to think about how to settle their future through marriage against social ostracisms.

Late marriage is another significant trend in Meitei families for both males and females. The girls are still unmarried by 35 years and man by 50 due to problems of higher education, family resource and choice. Men marry women younger than themselves in average cases although these are exceptions. Late marriage by both sexes, family planning-their achievements and modernisation schemes have focused state attention.

As regards the registration records the following statistics based on officially maintenaned day to day records of state Registration office, the position for the past 4 years, special marriage for 1990-91=56, 191-92-30, 192-93=20 and 1993-94=15. The general marriage registration for 1990-91=80, 1991-92=60 1992-93=50 and 193-94=47.

Essential marriage rites are to be observed for the customary and legal validity after declaration in the court.

Extended Courtship Period

Most of the surveys found the average age at which people first married to be 35/40 years for men and 30/35 years for woman. In the past the partners were at any average age of 20 years, for woman it was 15. Longer courtship leading to later marriage has been the trend of the modern period. The term between the first meeting and actual marriage averaged 5/6 years. Among those educated persons who between 1975-1994 this interval increased by some years for service and building of houses.

Decline in the number of children

It is a fact that the total fertility rate for an average meitei woman during her life time has shown a decline on account of family planning process and late marriage. In general cases 3.4 children are born for a woman of sound health. However, those who married at 19-20 had the maximum number of children. A woman may have about 10 children. A woman marrying after 30-35 years have tended to have 2 or 3 children in her life. Judging from the date according to the husbands profession that shows that and the couple in which they are white collar workers, they have few children.

Dowry and Maintenance problem in Manipur

The problem was not so serious as those of others States of India. Not a single case has so far been registered in the court for the dowry Maintenance/Chakthak-The customary law of the Meiteis, Indian laws and Hindus special marriage acts, adoption Act of 1956 recognised these aspects of woman rights. Maintenance, restitution of conjugal rights etc. are sought at the level of village panchayats, assembly of elderly people at the law courts(Judicial magistrate courts in every district, session court and family court since 1992). Cases of maintenance and restitution are quite common among the Meiteis, Muslim and tribals. Cases having sued for temporary steps to avoid hardship to the woman till the decision of the case and then permanent help to the aggrieved party after the decision of the law court. Attachment of the property of the husband (defaulter) or attachment of his salary or earning by order of the court is not due to the Meiteis. Customary courts (Panchayat) level) were very useful in such disputes in Manipur.

Position of women and Meitei perspective

In ancient Manipur women represented more than half of the total population and played a significant role in all works of life-management of the houses, helping men in agricultural operations, transplantation of paddy, spinning, weaving, husking paddy, cooking, washing utensil, etc. with a head load of fruits and paddy, vegetable or marketing in the bazaar. In times of religious ceremonies and festivals they take active parts in ritual, singing and dancing with their counter-parts. Knitting and weaving have occupied in their life to such an extent that marriage endowment would not be acceptable until and unless the knitting and weaving implements top the list. Marketing and pottery (for scheduled castes) were exclusively the work of woman. Manipuri woman being expert weaver supplied a good deal of supplementary food and income (upto 1991). They meet the requirement of traditional designs of embroideries and *Laiphee* (cloth for the deity). Strict division of labour is relaxed in sectional matters.

Women's status in political, military and judicial life was revealing in individual cases of some queens like Queen Linthoingambi and Queen

Tangjakhombi enhanced their capacity to defeat the invaders during the absence of the kings by their wisdom and skill in archery and horsemanship. Kuchu as a court to try women's cases was founded in the first century A.D. by Nongda Lairen Pakhangba (divine ancestor of Ningthouja dynasty). Liberation of women is not a new concept in so far their role in decision making process of the family was considerable- Female literacy accounts for 48.64 according to 1991 census.

In Manipur an honourable tradition as showing respect for women, children and Brahmans and care for the elderly are sustained in all families. There was no purdah system. The sense of morality and chasisty was very high. Women are not afraid of anybody when they go to any place with their brothers and guardians. Pre-marital sexual relationship is not permitted in any cases. They overcome any oppression and lust for their self-respect. The absence of any war baby in Manipur during the IInd World war clearly reflects the character of Meitei women, marriage and family. There is also a trend for the Manipuris to marry Brahman, Christian, tribal or any western community and would not heed any criticism from orthodox group.

From the psychological make-up of the forefather and the socio-historical conditions wives are allowed to eat ritual food, fruits of a particular family etc. Most of Indian, British and other ladies of the world are beginning to learn marked raise of social and religions what the Meitei women have already done viz. ordination of women to the priestess hood/Maibi hood in rituals of Lai-haraoba in the conduct of divination, dance music (Nupee pala/kirtans, mana Bhajan (Pashakhella), etc. Composition whether or not women should be allowed to use big cymbals, drums in Manipuri Kirtan has been under wide spread discussion for some years. The nuns/Lamboibi were provided food by every householder. In fact some of them are already done and Manipuri women have been doing almost all religious items which priests normally do except playing Pena/fiddle, second legal marriage and performed Arati/ waving of lamp. I had my intensity research the Meitei Puya/written scriptures and saying and got them, the meaning of which may be stated as follows– "Avemale is the master of 10 wives" and "A female can be married only one but a man can be married 100 times". In olden times it was quite impossible for women to do these things although which pattern may not be followed for all time. These reflect the patriarchal and party level character. But it may be observed that by application of gynaecology the lineage of a person is traced to the Mothers side. Any one who received books showing the parentage of the queens of Meitei kings and reign names of queens of each elder and powerful goddess show that the Meiteis may have the impression of inferring natural phase and of giving comments about the predominance of families.

Women's work in Meitei family has grown in importance since the percentage of women in regular employment has exceeded 42. as clerk, 22% as teachers, 6% in technical and relative works according to census

report of 1981. A look at the census of 1991 gives the figures— women cultivator = 58.40; Agricultural labourer =12.89; Household industry = 12.98 and other worker = 15.73 per hundred.2 women were elected to Manipuri Legislative Assembly in the by-election. There are women representatives and committee members members in gram panchayat, University Senate. Manipuri women paid unprecedented attention to the concept of human rights development from the distinctive socio economic and cultural ethoes knows as united mass agitation women's war (Nupi lal) in 1904, 1913 and second Nupi lal, 1939 against the colonial and feudal against the British and Maharaja. These movements serve as the basis for administrative reforms. The women group maintained close contact with people promptly attempting to save Bir Tikendrajit from the British gallows in 1891. The women play a part in the political affairs through such political organisations-women Mahila Semelona, women's Assembly Demand co-ordination committee, Manipur Chanura-Leishem marup(referred to as Macha Leima) which strove for Indian Independence, installation of an elected Assembly and protection of women's interest in social economics matter and move for inclusion if Manipuri Language in 8th Schedule of the Indian constitution. After achieving Statehood for Manipur, rights of equality and equal political participation, reflecting character of modern women had attraction for women elites. The struggle for human right protection and rights of self determinism, of peace have been activated by various non governmental organisation set up by all sections of social strata. In Imphal and other hill districts, there are women's up-rising organisations like Meira Paibi, Nesha Bandhi and All Manipur women Voluntary Association etc. In Imphal districts these Meira Paibi and Nesha Bandhi ranging form the central level to village level, town level as well as state level, strive for punishing the drunkards, drug addicts and counter acting the police and military excesses and violation of rights its basic function being to protect their interests. We come across who found it difficult to obey any rule when the agitators are their children. Again it is through such constructive women's organisation viz. State Social Welfare Board and Manipur Mahila Kalyan Samiti that Manipuri woman elites in the Seventies issued a journal called *Nupigi Yaipha Khongthang*, opened in family counselling centre with the financial assistance of Directorate of Social Welfare, Government of Manipur opened a hostel for the orphans and put forward their proposals and opinions concerning their problems. The Govt. Directorate of Social Welfare made it a point to set up observation Home, Special Home, Shajiwa (for children below 16 years). Balbhavan at Khuman Lempak, Ideal Blind School and Deaf and Mute School in Takyel.

It is evident from my experiences and official records that there are women holding posts as I.A.S. officers, M.L.As Under Secretaries, Directors, I.P.S Officers, Medical Specialists, Engineers, Judges in Sub-Judges Courts, Advocates and Principals of Colleges Manipuri women

gained national and international recognition as players in Games and Sports. Many women are engaged in police service with special knowledge and skill in traffic sign) and National Cadet Corps, painting and driving. They are better international players than other women since the Asian Games in Beijing in 1991 as per records.

Intestate succession— The Meiteis are treated as Hindus although some groups of the Meiteis claim to be non-Hindus, For legal purposes, the Hindu succession Act. 1956 is extended to the Meiteis/Manipuri Hindus. The Meiteis follow the Dayabhag school of law.

One point to be noticed is that the traditional school of Dayabhag is no longer applicable in the act of 1956. The intestate succession for a Meitei devolves according to the act of 1956. The property of male Meitei dying interstate is governed by Section (8) of the Act 1956 and section 9 of the act. Under this act entries in Class-I, II and III are specified in order of priority. The property of a Meitei female dying intestate is governed by Section 15 of the act of 1956. As per the provision of the act, other relevant acts for Meitei dying intestate are Section 18,20, 24 & 29 of the act of 1956.

Nature of Disputes in Matrimonial cases some cases of divorce and maintenance in Manipur under the British Regime were available. Matrimonial suits were tried by the village authority and by Meitei/Manipur State Darbar according to customary practices. If divorce is initiated by the wife and if she is not prepared for restitution she is to pay Rs.50/-within 3 years to the husband which is known as Nupi Mahal. If the man was unkind and unwilling to take back his wife Nupi Mahal of Rs.50/-was to be given to the wife. Nupi/Nupa Mahal does not arise. If the wife is pregnant at the time of divorce, She is entitled to 12 pots of paddy plus Rs.4/-(it must be increased by this time) known as Angang Chakthak, being the maintenance during the pregnancy period. This is extended to the concubine although she may not live in the husband's house when the divorce is absolute the wife/concubine is entitled to her dowry. Except his Chakthak the wife/concubine cannot claim anything. In case of any dispute regarding custody of the child the wife must hand over the child or issues to the husband.

The proper court having jurisdiction on matrimonial disputes is the District and Sessions Judge (2 Courts, Manipur East and Manipur West since, 1993) for the State of Manipur. The cases can be instituted at Sub-Judge/Chief Judicial Magistrate/Judicial Magistrate Ist Class Courts in hill Districts with special powers. Cases about adultery and maintenances of a child are frequent in hill courts. Knowledge of legal measures encourage even the tribals and minority community to the court of law for the verdict now a days although customary and religious laws guaranteed their legal rights. Manipur Government issued the opening of Family Courts, 1992 under No4/2/85, Judl(L/Pt), dated Imphal, 16th May 1992. The cases of matrimonial disputes have been transferred to the Judge Family Court.

Takeyl from that of District and Sessions Judges. Consideration is also given to the provision of a counselling centre, appointment of the Judge with Judicial experience plus degree in Psychology/Social work/sociology and knowledge of Manipuri Language. I personally collected the data from Family Court, Takyel, Imphal which received the case from the date of establishment upto 31-3-1994, the table includes the suits of that came from the Districts of Imphal Thoubal and Bishenpur.

In the Family court, Mainpur, Takyel; Information For the Quarter, Ending 31-3-94

No. Of Family courts Set Up so Far
Places at which Courts are Set Up
Date on Which Set Up
Actualdate of Commencement of functioning
No. Of cases Received
No. Of cases disposed
No. Of cases pending
Nature of cases
Suggestions for improvement

1. One Imphal 12.8.92 12.8.92 34 23 11 Os. (M-Divorce)
2. 4/2/2 (M-Restitution of conjugal rights)
3. 2/2 -(M-Judicial separation)
4. 38/28 10 (Gaurdians-Wards Act, 1890)
4. 3/1/2 (Under the Hindu Adoption & Maintenance Act, 1956)
5. 7/1/6 (Other cases)
6. 159/122/37 Crminal cases (Maintenance Under Sect. 125 crP.C.)
7. 95/70/25 Criminal cases (Alteration of rates of maintenance Under Sect. 127 cr P.)
8. 97/27/70 Criminal cases (Enforcement of maintenance order)
9. 27/21/6 Judicial Misc., cases
10. 1/1 -Civil execution
11. Total 467 298 169

Conclusion

In this concluding section the writer wants to give some connective reflections in which he finds the relation among the problems, trends and solutions offered.

1. The sacramental character and taking of vows on equal love by the parties are sought to be proved by the blessing of the elderly persons, relatives and invities present in the function. The sacramental element is kept still in-tact although diverse elements are incorporated into one single compound and evaporate affairs.

2. The typical oath sayings are in epitome of family life prior to and after Hindunisation of Manipur. We cherish the expression in the law court (Panchayat) Cheirap and session Judges/Judicial commissioners court etc.)

used by a Manipur Male or Female. For a Rajkumar he is obliged to take oath– "May Ibudhou Pakhangba-divine ancestor Pakhangba be my witness, I will not tell lies". For a Meitei male– "Let my forefather/pitrilok be my witness", for a Meitei lady-" I will not live to serve my husband if I tell lies." I will die as an issuless person if I tell lies"

3. Secular life and modernisation process have abolished class status on birth (Rajkumars and Brahmans), discrimination on the basis of feudalism, patriarchal character. The increasing use of household modern appliances, availability of ready made necessities, ownership of videos, electricity, fan, car, scooter, telephone, air condion etc. mark the improvement of living in the families of hills and plains. They have more leisure time specially for married persons/women who were tied down by household work like cleaning house, washing utensils, cooking and child rearing. As a result of these changes women participate in creative and voluntary activities.

4. For all practical purposes women in a typical family claimed equality with men, But the old truism that they are abala/weak physiologically and must be confined to home management and child care still holds sway in the circles, Discrimination still exists in their relation with their husband, father and mother-in-laws. They can follow a vocation with the knowledge and approval of them. In the past they followed the surname of the husband. It was only with literary awakening attention was drawn that woman after marriage must retain the former surname

5. Fight against bad habit of a husband against wife for desertion, negligence of duty, etc. and drug addiction have been taken by the Yaonlois/ underground revolutionary organisations during the last 15 years in connection with the complaints of the ladies by their appeals, publication, etc. They deal with such cases after demanding explanation for such family crimes and social problems

6. As in other parts of the world it was a tradition for the sons to give support to their aged parents financially, and spiritually. But because of changing family structure-rise of nuclear family, demise of joint family, population growth etc. the aged person when, living alone faced insecure problems, family quarrels. Social insurances must be improved to help the aged through the help of sons/daughters and the government.

7. In modern day Manipur, the interest of Meiteis, or for that matter the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and the Manipuri Muslims are always related to sound family systems and social interest. All interests can be served best if he brings the concerned communities into an accord with the concerned family members and achieved them satisfactory. This concept must guide the family. We must and will make our best efforts for a happy family.

8. There is the Meitei concept of family an approach to harmony through union of mind and hearts of people. The word Tinaba is used to indicate union. In the prayers(marriage, daily worship, etc.) ritual of

Shingtek Shingthaba, there is a call to the deity from the people to protect the family and to have the statistics of population of every house. There we get the answers to the modern question. The methods, at least some thousand years ago, will still appear to show the effective way.

Notes and references

1. Yotsabi-Iron tripod is the symbol of Meitei settlement in every house. The norm enjoins the performance of Yumchangba by opening fire with husks and fuels in a house. It is believed that the evil spirits, cannot do any harm to a person if he preserves fire. In Hindu version it is said that the science of making fire and cooking was originated by God Ingouba and Goddess Loirang Panthoibi. It marks the end of nomadic life in their history.
2. Census of India, 1991 series-15 Manipur being paper-I of 1991 supplement published by director of Census operation. Manipur, Imphal.
3. The Manipur Family Court Rules, 1992 along with the Record Register and judgement.
4. Holy texts, viz., Langlon (1977) chapters 9,23,24 and Puya Meihouba part II, (1967), chapter 5-10, 26-27. Speak of the importance of family life in human birth.
5. Dr. M. Kirti Singh Religious developments in Manipur in the 18th and 19th Centuries, Imphal 1981, p.p. 87-106, Religion and culture of Manipur, 1985, Delhi, section on social philosophy.
6. Vide the Record Register maintained by the Registration office of the state Govt. during the last 5 years. I personally visited the office on 3/8/94, 2/9/94, 3/9/94 and 8/9/94 and discussed the concerned officials for data collection about special marriage and general marriage Registration as adopted here.

12

THE CHANGING IDEAS OF LAND OWNERSHIP AND RULES OF INHERITANCE AMONG THE MEITIES OF MANIPUR

Introduction

In this paper we fix our attention upon the land tenures, changing ideas about land ownership and rule of inheritance of the Meities people for land was the basis and safest form of investment for them. The practice of free selling and buying land especially of permanent cultivation was not much known to them. Land hunger and land lust have been the greatest weakness, among its rulers leading to the first devastation of Manipur by the Burmese in 1757. Under the Meiteis concept of land ownership the King (leimaba=ownership of the country) as the sole authority was the provide land for the support of his family, nobles and the subjects. It was his pleasant duty to grant lands to those who could destroy tigers, displayed heroism in the battlefield and performed creative services to the state. As a matter of policy the Kings of the Ningthouja dynasty (33-1949 A.D.) granted lands to the immigrants from the east and the west for the increase of Meitei population there is a tradition of naming the villages after the inheritance such as Imphal takkil (named after the in immigrants from Tripura) Sagol Tongba (named from the horse cultured people who lived in this village). If any immigrant comes, he is provided with a land holding in a suitable village where he has to start work as a citizen of the Kingdom.[1]

We are also inclined to think that this policy of encouragement was reversed later. Sir James Johnstone, the political Agent of Manipur (1880-1891) could not grow a little tea for his home consumption during the time of so patriotic and nationalist a king as Sir Chandrakirti Singh.[2]

The structure of land system and inheritance among the Meities as developed during these centuries were the result of two forces, the ancient practice and the modern theory. Though in matters of common purpose the ancient customary systems have been for the most part retained since 33 A.D.; in all technical matters the modern legal system was adopted for both. I am obliged to deal with them in two parts, the first one being a discussion of land structure and ownership and the second being a description of the rules as to inheritance.

(i) Classification of land under the Manipuri Rajas-The land tenure prevailing in ancient times was of two forms, e.g.(a) Revenue free estate and (b) Revenue paying estate. The revenue free estate were one or other of 4 kinds: (1) Sana or Ningthem lou (lands enjoyed by the King and his family) which were revenue free in perpetuity under the Kings. The limits

for them were 250 parries/626 acres of land under this tenure before the implementation of land laws Act 1960.

(ii) Lairou (God's land)-Lands which were endowments to deities and some particular temples made by the Kings. Some of the Umanglais (forest deities) also received tax free lands for their maintenance. Among the land grants which are enumerated we have found that the grants made to the pre-Vaishnavite deities are fewer in quantity than those made to Vaishnavite gods. At the instance of the Kings mother and grand-father the British Political Agent recognised eight important Vaishnavite deities such as Sri Govindaji, Bijoy Govindaji, Nityananda, Advaita Prabhu, Vrindavon-chandra, Ramji Prabhu and Hanuman Thakur, Kamakhya by allotting with acres of revenue free lands and the sites of the temples. These were 50 Paris of land/125 acres under Sri Govindaji's name and 25 Paris/75 acres under Vrindavon chandra (deity usually worshipped by the Yubaraj or crown prince) Each of the Vaishnavite and pre-Vaishnavite deities approved by the king was made to hold not less than 5 Paris of land/12.5 acres.

(iii) Lugun lou (sacred thread land)-These were grants made to the Hindu Brahmans on the occasion of taking sacred thread by the Kings and their family. The Brahmans who did the necessary formalities paid no rent to the king in their life time. They cannot sell the lands for their own self-interest. Unlike the above lands, these were subjects to the reversion to the king again after the death of the concerned Brahman. If he leaves behind a widow, then half of the pair is to be reverted to the king and another half is to be kept for the maintenance of the widow. The data of acres of land held under what is known as Lugun Luo cannot be ascertained.

(iv) Khorpose and Tolop Lou (salary land)-These were lands given to the kings daughters officials, favourites, titleholders and scholars. It was the land which bound the king and his nobles together. There was a multitude of recipients when the Kings of yore have given alarge subsistence allowance in the shape of lands. Every noble man have rights and duties which depended on the manner he was connected with the number of Paris (standard use for agricultural purposes). This system(resembling the shan system to a certain extent) which had been made during the king's reign continued in force for some years during the British regime. A distinction is made in the ancient system between Manaru (simple prize land) and Pangal lou (exceptional life) In the case of the former the land was reunited to the king after the death of the award but in the latter case the land was passed over to his sons without any condition. However the descendent of the former can own it on payment of the usual textile land (land given for the post) is assumed at the low rate of 1 basket per year per pair. According to another mode of classification land in the 10 Villages of Manipur was divided into two, e.g. (1) Siphai village and (ii) Civilian village.

As in other village communities we can speak of 3 parts of Manipuri village. 1) the village itself or the cluster of homesteads inhabited by the members; (2) lands under cultivation surrounding the village and (3) waste

lands for pasturage owned by the communities. These parts are necessary for the above division. The Siphai village got one pair of land (2.5 acres) per head from the lands around their villages. The village is revenue free. In 1892-93, 1,514 Paris of land have been granted free of rental as service lands to sepoys of the newly raised police force, to revenue and judicial officers and to the minor Raja (Sir Churachand Singh). Grant of land was made to the soldiers in order of their ranks. It was given in his life-time only if he was without any male issue. If the soldier has one or more than one male discount, one towards (Half a pari) is retained for their maintenance.

The civilian villages got one pair of land per head from the fields around their villages. Each individual in the civilian village is entitled to cultivate it subject to the payment of regular tax of one chengkok (about 20 seers) of rice to the King every year. Every adult person in this village with exception of some (the best wrestler, cheithaba or the bearer of all misfortunes in year, Scholars or titleholders exempted from this system by the King) was to attend the Kings office for 10 days in every 40 days without being paid for doing so. The King granted it to the village which held the lands by the regular payment of lousal or rent in paddy and a sort of military tenure. If the subject do not pay the revenue the grant being conditional is by the breach of condition and the King may granted to another. But no lease of any kind or patta was issued to these land holders by the Kings. He can give away the land in any way he likes.

The question has been raised whether the king was the absolute owner of land as the British writers like Captain E.W. Dun, Mc Culloch; etc. have maintained in their accounts. Against this option, however, there is the testimony of T.C. Hodson in his book 'The Meitheis" Which says that cultivated fields were held in severalty, a sure proof that we have to deal with a state of affairs half way between absolute joint tenure and perfect severalty. No doubt, the king was the severing over all the land. But he couldn't take private property without compensation and advice of the village headman. There is a kind of land called Tounarou where a person opened fields after clearing off the virgin jungles with the permission of the king. The king cannot remove him without compensation he has to pay rent after 3 years He can purchase it in areas out side Imphal and has to pay the tax as a fixed time. (of war, emergency) without any in former. In case of Sarkari (king lands of Imphal the burdens are severe it changes from year to year. The settlement their has to decor the nature at the time of marking the boundary of a manned wrote wrong of flag to make his holding. Custom recognises the village rights to grazing and wood and grass cutting extends over the waste land adjoining the cultivated areas. There were plates which prove how the King purchased private lands whenever he wanted any for several purposes. The chronicles bear a record of such cases, where he provided another piece of land to the owners.

The Intermediary or Feudal Tenures Prior to 1891 A.D

The positions of princes, princesses, noblemen and Brahmans were analogous to those of zamindars brought about by their belief and system Jubaraj Koireng whose real name was Tekendrajit was a remarkable personality. There is Jubaraj Louken (field) and Jubaraj Palli (dam) in the eastern side of Imphal named after him. The king's functionaries like the title-holders and the village nobles are invariably land owners. Some of the princes Brahmans, etc. who in days before the annexation of Manipur to British (1891) had been fortunate, after that, found themselves reduced to being common people. They come off badly in the change of system according to the British method. There notable princess made representations to the P.A. for allowing them to open new fields and exemption of tax. The princess was to get 25 Paris of land as dowry at the time of marriage up to the time of IInd world war, the vote of amusement for the princes who had more than 25 Paris was fined at 1/2 the usual rent. In 1892-93, almost .25 of the lands for which pattas have been granted were held by persons other than the cultivating riots. These lands were con in the possession of "Rajkumars, state officials and Brahmans who depended on the tenancy collected from the tenant's. They were practical Zamindars in the modern sense of the term for the land remained their property.

In 1897-98 the princess (Rajkumars ie, descendants of the past rulers or the sons of the rulers. This title is given to the sons of the Rajkumars). They generally take more than one wife. They have a life of indolence because of their birth. Their concept is beyond description) offered stiff opposition to the British method of land survey and settlement. They wanted to be exempted from the payment of revenue, or at any rate to hold lands at low rates as compared with the rest of the population which will enable them to sublet the lands and retain a sufficient income to live at ease. They wish everybody else to be highly taxed, otherwise if the revenue of all is reduced to the same low rate the difficulty of obtaining sub-tenants again arise. The British were reluctant to treat them as privileged class. By 1900-1, the Rajkumars and the Brahmans residing in Imphal are not inquisitive about paying up the taxes punctually. They are adepts at the game of hide and seek of the time of revenue collection.[4]

Relation between land lords an Tenants-According to the system which prevailed in Manipur the occupants of the land were divided in two classes: (i) Landlord (Loupu), (ii) Annual Tenants (Langol Yanba). (i) Land lords (Loupu)-They are the land owners and patta holders in the greater part of the service lands and patta holdings. In some cases a landlord still retained a portion of the land usually that which he could himself (or with the help of labourers) husband. The reminder was given to the tenants on payment of customary rent. The land thus remained in his ownership all the years the tenants cultivated the land in his name. Tenure of this kind was investigated, recognised, defined and recognised by the British. Some of them attempted to profit by the revenue system of the British to take out

pattas for land which they sublet for grazing purposes to the neighbouring village at high rates 5a.

The tenants (Langon Yanba)-The parts of the land held under ordinary patta largely cultivated by ryots who can pay rent in kind to the officer or the priests or the title-holders. Since it was not possible for the owners or managers of temples who was the finance and revenue member of the Darbar. At present the machinery for maintaining survey and record of rights is controlled by the Director of land settlement from 1957 onwards.

Land reforms since 1947-The customary laws were found to be inadequate to deal with the growing menace of transfer of ownership. The Assam land revenue regulation, 1886 as extended to the Union Territory of Manipur and Bombay Vidarbha Region Agricultural Tenants (Protection from Eviction and Amendment of Tenancy Laws Act,) 1957, as extended to the Union Territory of Manipur by notifications under section 2 of the Union Territories (Laws) Act of 1950 were inacted. On their enforcement's the old system which was in existence for 60 years was superseded. Again the wind of change that swept the country according to the new land policy has also taken Manipur in its sweep in certain aspects.

Manipur land Revenue and land reforms Act, of 1960 which confers certain rights upon the land lords and tenants was amended in 1972. The Manipur land Revenue and land Reforms (Amendment Bill) '75 was passed by the Legislative Assembly under article 136 of the Act. of 1960 a person representing a family is allowed to hold a maximum of 25 acres in the aggregate, If the members exceed five he may hold additional acres for each member in excess of five, so however as not to exceed 50 acres in the aggregate.

The use of land as advocated by Vinobaji in his Bhudan, Gramdan, etc., as covetable ideas has entered the academic side and yet, it was not enforced due to the peculiar condition of Manipur. Under 20 point economic programme the total number of hectares of land distributed has reached 10, 30781 and the beneficiaries are 19,712 of these were 1277 scheduled tribes, 20 scheduled cast people and 43 co-operative societies. A special cell for land reforms is being set up for the implementation of land individuals, co-operative societies in Amusing (Uncultivated acres of land surrounding the Loktak Lake where stable for tamed to cultivate the lands it was customary to lease them out to tenants on the rent for a year. A tenancy has no legitimate title to the land though he merely possess it. He cultivated from harvest to harvest. The harvest was divided between them according to custom. The usual rent was fixed at 12 pots of paddy i.e. 32 seers (64 tongs) per pari for a year.[6] Sometimes he cultivates on the conditions of dividing the product into halves and getting his half. As per the custom the tenant who was in the cultivating possession of the land could be ejected before the 5th phairel of Shri Panchami/Janu-Feb.,5. Ploughing for the coming year must commence on the Hindu festival of Panchami after which

no owner can eject the tenants. The system is still well recognised and observed by all as in the past. 6

Under the old law plough cattle for cultivation was not supplied. In case where plough cattle for the cultivation is supplied, 40 phoubots (80 baskets) are estimated for 1.1/2 pare of land to the owner by a minor phunganai (a couple of slaves). 30 phoubots are payable in respect of a pair by a single male slave to the owner.

Additional Notes

Collection of paddy-The village headman collected the paddy from their villages and kept in the granary from where Louerang ba the king's officer could use them when necessity arises. No penalty was imposed upon the defaulters though it was found in the village level.

Grazing ground-Every village has grazing ground as its boundary. It is free from taxes. The villagers are to pay the fine in case the tiger kills the cattle in the grazing grounds. It was common in the post. If someone encroaches upon the grazing the ground the Lowuerngba has to decide the same after receiving the report from the villagers.

Cattle tress-pass-When a question of cattle trespass arises Sallungba, a King's officer has to try the case. He is an official whose duty was to keep a detailed account of the cattlepart owing to the valley.

Fishing and Fields-Cultivating fields are related to the part of fisheries since they are used for purpose of both. They can be utilised for purpose of cultivation in the months of June, July and August only. If some one wants to make boundary he should first, dig, a small water source for the interest of other people.

Collection of revenue

Every people was obliged to pay revenue in kind and to admit that the land was the King's and not his own that he was the King's tenant and therefore bound to serve him. There was an official called Phunal selungba (afterwards lourung purel Achouba) whose duty was to superintend all matters connected with land cultivation, settlement measurement., general survey of the existing land and classification of land. The collection or revenue in terms of paddy was entrusted to the care of an officer called Phourungba. The officer such as Leikai Keiroithou was urged to help the King in collecting the paddy which varies from 2 baskets to 13 from each house from each paree.[7] The settlement officer caused the records to be compiled in which he wrote down lands given to the sepoys (4) lands of 4 ., personal land of the King and total number of men. They were detailed and accurate that they tell us how many owners, vill-lags, nature of tinaney etc. there were in the country.

Revenue during the British regime consists of two types(i) tax on cultivated lands in the valley @ Rs.5.00 per pari and (ii) a house tax amounting to Rs.2/-per house. (instituted in lie of the lallup system to which reference was made (under the old system no tax was levied for the

dwelling house and the garden). The problem of survey and settlement came into being after the British regime in the early nineteen's. For purposes of collection of revenue the valley was divided into 4 panans (Naharup, Ahallup, Khabam and Laipham), each in charge of Manipuri official called Lakpa whose function is a sort of compromise between that of tehsildar and Maujadar in Assam. The office was placed under S.D.C. and continued so till it was placed under the control of Deputy Commissioner with a number of S.O's. The Political Agent and Superintendent headed the office till it was entrusted to the care of the President, Manipur State Darbar (who) elephants were built by the Kings) area is to be done after the implementation of ceiling laws. The new land policy has compelled the ex-Kings and members of the royal family to sell away their lands voluntarily and hence no payment of compensation has yet been made in Manipur. Land belonging to Sri Govindaji have been taken over by the Temple board for continuing its maintenance. Lands in case of other gods will be shortly finalised.

Special laws are in existence governing the grant sites, building and plots in Imphal municipal area small committees and other hill stations, Required changes have been made as regards the land tenures and settlement of the people by these measures. The ownership of land become more broad based. The size of settlement varies greatly most of them were fairly extensive villages covering-acres. There has been an increase of population resulting to 325 persons per square Km. according to the census of 1971. 1.6% of the valley has been covered by house site, roads schools, govt. Offices, playground and markets whereas 8.4% (1.87 lakhs of hectares) form the agriculture land. There have been cases of encroachment for habitation to the cultivable fields and reserved forests in the Keibul Lamjao. (wild life sanctuary for rare species of brow-antlered deer). The Govt. of Manipur by its notification in 1975 has declared Keibul Lamjao as a national park. The expenditure spent for the project is Rs.0.37 Lakhs. But the people in four villages adjoining the wild life sanctuary openly challenged the Government policy by setting some acres to fire. The fight between land hungry people and Government is still for ever.

Of late parts of the valley have been peopled by immigrants mostly from the hills, area of the Nepalies and the Refugees from East Bengal. The system of leasing in and out cultivation farm land to the resident farmers on payment of 12 pots of Sangbai (7.2. quintals of paddy per agricultural year is still functioning. Quite natural to the pressure of population and scarcity of land, double cropping system has been practised in some areas with the consent of the land owner in place of the lease out from one agricultural season to a single crop. It has also been found for the tenant to pay in cash/ and not in terms of paddy) to the paddy owner at the commencement of some agricultural seasons.[8]

The land policy raises certain crucial considerations which required further study/ in the context of socio-economic conditions prevailing in this

part. There is still a long way to go as some amendments are still in the form of a bill. The bhudan and gramdana movement failed to arouse popular enthusiasm of the people. The battle for land was much in evidence in the civil courts. The land reforms have suffered from a number of draw backs some of which are administrative (Lack of political will, legal troubles arising from the application of laws unsuitable for its soil). While some could be avoided by the people.

(11) The laws of Inheritance

The property must be equally divided among the sons according to Meithei method. They must be born of the parents after the marriage of ancient Meithei manner. Usually the youngest son get the largest share of the property in view of his association with the parents till the time of their death.[9] The father may live with any one of his sons as he wishes though he usually live with the youngest son. But colonel McCulloch has emphasized upon the will in the following words" It is willed away according to the pleasure of the testator, but is generally given to those individualing of the family who are most in need of it without referring to seniority,[10] Sometimes the relatives can assert the claim to be the inheritor of the childless person on the additional ground of having performed the necessary funeral obsequies of the childless deceased family. Under the influence of Hindu religion, the Manipuri began to assimilate the Dayabhaga system under which the heirs and heiresses inherit the property as tenants-in-common and not as joint tenants. Each member know his definite share. As per the ancient method, the eldest son gets, in so far as the garden is concerned, the southern side second son next northern side and so on and the youngest son the northern most side lengthwise at the time of partition. The daughters do not get property but they get dowry at the time of their marriage. An unmarried daughter on the death of her father lives with one of her brothers preferably with one who inherits the property. If she leaves her husband' house by way of divorce or by becoming a widow, she can claim residence in her paternal house, as of right. It is a simple practice. The parents may be benefited by the yaonginba service (under this the bridegroom live in the father in laws' house serving the in laws temporarily or permanently for marrying his daughter) The one case in which a daughter should get share of land property was when she was a daughter without a brother. We have number of records for brotherless daughters. A maiden who remained unmarried throughout his life may be given a share in this method also. A man or woman may adopt a son with the mutual authority. Adopted son inherits equally the adoptives' other sons, born after the adoption.

Widow-A widow is not entitled to any property of her husband but she is given maintenance on the condition that she lives in her husbands' house and does not remarry. She lives, sometimes as the guardian of the minor sons. She may purchase land which can be inherited by her son or sons or any other lawful person.

Inheritance in stridhan-The Meithei method recommends the women's' property among several classes in order of their preference husband, son, and daughter. In the absence of these three, the property is to be treated as that of the husband and devolves in usual ways.[11] These customary laws are at present at a break even point for they seem to be a link of old laws with the modern trends.

Notes and Reference

1. Information collected from late Th. Madhob Singh and Kh. Yaima Singh. Pandit of the Manipur Palace.
2. Sir James Johnstone, My experiences in Manipur and Naga Hills 1971, 1PP-104, 105, also foot-70-72. There is a saying among the Manipuris that the British East India company begged from the King of Manipur an area of land which can be covered by a complete set of leather of an animal. The British measured the necessary space for the British Residency by that set. The annexation of the land by the British through strategy was realised by the people.
3. L. Ibungohal Singh, Introduction to Manipur, Imphal 1960. PP 96-98; also information collected from S Gourahari and S. Kunjo Singh, the Ex-private Secretaries to H.H Maharaja of Manipur Bodhachandra Singh (1941-55); Royal chronicle Cheitharol Kumbaba,
4. Annual administrative Reports of Manipur Agency, 1982-1902(Section on revenue) Also process of oppressive dominance by a handful of upper caste group possessing land and its resources to kept the poor and helpless lower stratra in their place was challenged by the peasants under the leadership of H. Irabot Singh in the middle of the nineteen's.

5a. L Lbungohal Singh op cit, PP 93-95; T.C Hodson, The Meiteis, 1974 section on Agriculture.

5b. Govindajis' lands in such areas as Charangpat, Thinungei Ningthoukhong and Uyan are cultire by the Kiteds, a class of as hereditary slave. The slave-hood can be released by buying a substitute in his place according to Manipur Law.

6. For details L. Ibungohal Singh, Op cit, P 94, Most of the British account may be consulted in this connection.

   Tangballoi-This is one of highest titles of the land in early Manipur. Usually this is awarded to a hero or a warrior who can arrest 100 enemies in a war or 150 furious wild beasts (like tiger) or captures a furious wild animal and thereby saving the life of the ruling King or captures a king of an enemy country in war.

   In granting this title all the people civil and military assembled with the Maharaja as its president for discussing the suitable man for the title. The man who secured the greatest support got the deserving honour.

7. See fn. 6. An instance is on record that King Debendra Singh (1850-A.D.) tried to exempt his people from paying tax which could not implemented during his short regime of 3 months.
8. My field work.
9. This practice is similar to some hill tribes such as the Purums Naga tribes and the most Kuki tribes are exactly opposite to it. Among the lois (Scheduled caste groups) the youngest sons get the house and land, but movable property is divided among the sons
10. Col, McCulloch quoted by T.C. Hodson, Op cit, section on Inheritance.
11. L. Ibungohal Singh, Op cit, PP 90-93.

13

THE SAMAVEDIC VISA VIS GANDHARVA UPAVEDIC TRADITION AND CULTURE IN MANIPUR

Introduction

The present paper as being presented herewith is an attempt at the survey of Manipuri music and kirtan with special reference to the Samaveda and Gandharva Veda. It is discussed broadly in 3 parts viz. The first part is devoted to Samavedic music and its impact in Manipuri Life; the Second Part is a critical exposition and interpretation of different theories Gandharva upa Veda. The Third part is the author's suggestion and reflections on this theme from the discussion.

Whereas on the one hand, Hindunisation has its wonderful impacts, on the other hand it is also subject to modern anthropological and social scientists finding. As such a dire need was felt for the study of the Manipuri's with reference to the samavedic and Gandharva upa vedic elements in their culture.

From the indological and social researcher's stand point, the main attraction as still existing here is the practice and culture of music and dance, how it is related to their life, the basis for justifying the tradition and how they preserved the tradition of music and dance in this part which is under study.

Lord Krishna told Arjuna "Among the sacred books, I am sama veda." Krishna acknowledged all kinds of forms as part of His Divine essence. It is supposed to occupy an important place in Hindu mind as Bhagavan Krishna extols Sama Veda as Himself. Mahatama Gandhi considers truth to be the essence of Hinduism by citing Samveda, the Upanishad, the epics and the Gita according to orthodox view, the four Vedas are the works of God Brahma himself and not of human composition. after writing them Brahma entrusted the task of explaining them to 4 Brahmans Jaimini was in charge of the Sama Veda. To Vyasa also is attributed the authorship/editorship of Vedas and Puranas in popular belief.

Samaveda does not throw any light on the development of religious ideas and literary value of the Aryans. It is the hymn book/musical selection from the Rig Veda, Of the 1549 verses chandas in various melodies known as Saman (to accompany the Soma ritual) only 78 or 75 are not derived in the Rig Veda... Sa means a re and ama means alap. Its stanzas are composed in Gayatri metre in the praga tha strophe, both of which materiel forms were intended to be sung. It is divided into 2 parts. The first part which is made up of verses/semi verses from the Rig Veda are arranged in decades, the first group of which is addressed to Agni, the second to Indra

and the third to Soma. The second part, containing 400 chants, is arranged on a different principle. It amounts of small groups of stanzas generally in triplicate form, which follow the order of the main sacrifices. The second part is secondary in character and may be a later compilation.

Sama Veda and development of Indian Music

The Samaveda is "a standing movement to the wonderful skill and originality of the ancient Indians in the science of vocal music". The Samveda is plainly songs with well developed science of music behind the songs/hymns. The ancients declare it as" truly tonal" and is also "the product of sun". The close relation between music and Shining/light is pointed out in many cases by the primitive people. Music is used at the time of eclipses and it removes darkness and evil spirits. Samveda is also connected with witchcraft and sorcery.

The close association with sound (Music) and light (colour/heat) is endorsed by modern science. The same is pictorially shown in the Rag-Mala of Indian music. Rigs are transformed into songs of the sama by the appropriate addition of words called stobhas viz. ha; u; ho; oh etc.

Later development of Indian music

The Vedic music is the music of voice modulation being bound as udatt, anudatta and swarita. The melodies of Saman chants which have been preserved orally by the Brahman priests with accuracy show the origin of **Saptak**/Seven note-scale out of these 3 basic tones. The method of singing Samaveda is different from that of classical music but 7 tunes-Sa, Ri, etc. is the same in both. In the **Chandogya Upanishad** which is based on the Samaveda, 5 types of musical reading have been indicated, i.e. Himkara, Prastava, Udgitha, Pratihas and Nidhan. In social life, there is a close connection between rites and music, various melodies developed, particularly 6 melodies corresponding to 6 seasons. These were the genesis out of which seven musical types like the Prabandhas, Vastus, Dhrupads, Chandas and Roopakous, all of which flourished during the Gupta period. The melodies chants were handed down by vocal traditions only. Later they were collected in ganas or song books which shower the manual of singing of song in musical notation. The different musical Ghanaians can be traced to Sama Vedic practice as the same Rik bols was sung differently by different singers. There are different types of modification. Sama Veda has thousand ways of singing according to Patanjali.

Two special tunes viz. the Brihat and the Kuthan tara are found in the Rig Veda. There are hints that the oldest of them have been connected with the popular pre-Brahmanical sorcerers. The second part of the Samaveda Brahmana, a ritual work of the Samaveda is a manual of witch craft which is concerned with the employment of various Samans for sorcery. The Brahmanical injunction that the recitation of the Rigveda and the Yajurveda, must cease on the sound of Saman being heard, is for all purposes reminiscent of early practices. The sounds produced from the

different parts of the body, the abdomen, throat and head made a system by itself. The ratio and proportion of the sound pattern were discovered and the science of shruties was developed later.

Age of the Samaveda-Its age is older than that of the Yajurveda whose formulae being made for the ritual are not directly addressed to the Gods who are but shadowy beings, having a loose connection with tee sacrifice. Sameveda may have connections with Indo-Iranian Age, and the old Testament. The chanting of Avestan and O.T. was done according to stric rules. The English word Psalm means a sacred song. By this time musical instruments like Vina made their appearance with scientific background. The Naradiya Siksa which is concerned with the recitation of the Samaveda refers to the correspondence between the notes of venue and Vina, implying that there was a set of musicians using Venue as their accompaniment and another set using Vina as their accompaniment. H.A. Popley observed as follows "That vocal had already got beyond the primitive stage may be concluded from the somewhat complicated method of chanting the Sama Veda, which probably goes back to the Indo-Iranian age."

Influence in Manipuri culture

The following instances will serve as samples of Sama veda influence in Manipuri life. The Brahmans/Caste Hindus had their distinct identity in Manipuri society since the 15th century A.D. The Brahmans better known as Bamons of 3 Veda/Sakhas came from different parts of India and settled in Manipur valley with royal patronage. *Bamon Khunthoklon* deals with the arrival of Brahmans, their languages facts relating to the Vedic branch. The descendants of Manipuri surnames viz. Brahmachari Mayum, Aribam and Guru Aribam, etc. profess to follow Sama Veda by tradition. Some families vi-z. Phurailatpam, Guru Aribam and Vachaspatimayum are the followers of Yajurveda. When an enquiry is made about the competent priest about the Yajur Veda rites, the person is allowed to follow the Samaveda according to Manipuri Legislation under the Maharajas. The Aryan features and the genealogies preserved in Bamon Khunthoklon give a strong support to this point. Sama Veda was by far the most powerful scripture for the Manipuri Bamons. We have as yet to find out the Sakhas, Shrauta, sutra, etc. among them.

79 Vedic Rishis serve as poet composers in Samaveda and it is a fact of history that these personalities especially of Vedic period are more often than not shrouded in obscurity. Ushana, priest of the Assure is no exception to this rule. As far as one can gather old records, Dr. Y. Bhagya, a scholar of old Meitei faith maintains that Urak Ushana, a priest, a court pandit figured in old Meitei scriptures during the time of King Pakhangba, the divine ancestor and a great figure in Manipuri lore. In his research he identified Vedic Ushana with Ushana, Urak as found in Meitei text called Sagok Lamlen Ahanba. Urak Usha has also been described by a line of Sagok as the court poet of Emperor Kangba Kangkhan of the Hayachak (Satya age who is credited with the science of ploughing and agriculture.

Contemporary with Prithu Maharaja of the Hindu Purankars he patronage Ushan of the Urag clan which is frequently mentioned in Hindu Puranas, Ushan is but another name of Sukracharya, the priest of the Asuras. Lord Krishna recognises Ushana as an accomplished poet in the Gita. He is also a founder of the School of politics. The recital of text and translation songs of the Meitei are conducted by him (at the time of ones death) to whom are due to the Vedic Hymns and asuric vidyas. The secret of preparing sacred fire, preparing intoxicated drink are found here also. A comparative study of Vedic and Meitei world new contains hidden secrets which are years of research.

Stobha in Manipuri Nat Sankritan

Sankritan is a Yajna and a way of life for the Manipuris. No ritual and observance is complete without the Sankritan. Rajmel Abhinaya is an inseparable part of every Meitei kirtan-which is the epitome of the highest Philosophy of life. The shouting of Samavedic stobha is exhibited at the time of *mel Thaba*/concluding part of Rajamel Abhinaya. Stove of Samvedhic pursuation corresponds to **A Laoba** or **Hoi Laoba** of the Meiteis; the audience stands up and shouts stabha (a sound of interpolating a string of words with particular significance like Au, h. owa. etc. The stobha is said to belong to Divine bird Garuda expressing the singing of 4 vedas with his flapping of wings. The body of the audience participating represents heavenly bird and their movements depict how garuda soars high with the 2 mortise of Radha and Krishna on his back. The sound of Garuda's flight is symbolised by stobha ganas. Kritan provides a healthy form of enjoyment and contemplation. I agree with Confucius who said "Music is an essential basis of a nations civilisation, the right kind of music can cause harmony of spirit".

Manipuri Music employ's the classical styles of India like 7 musical notes, swar, word, Laya including tala Melody and the freedom to present the song, etc. The profound influence is the sentiment of Bhakti rasa which came from Samabeda. Singing of Sama songs was done at a soma sacrifice to please Lord Indra in Vedic times to provide a feeling of calmness. But in Manipuri practice sama Vedic ganas are sung by the Brahmanas at the opening ceremony of any assembly of learned people in Manipur. In Vedic gana no musical instrument is permitted but the laya uniform speed is maintained.

Radha is the **hladini sakti** in Bengal Vaishnavism. In more than one place in the Brahma Vaivarta Purana it has been mentioned that the etymology of the word has been determined in the sama Veda where however it does not exist (K.J.Ch. 13). The love story of Radha and Krishna is immortalised by poet Jayadeva in **Gita Govinda** in the form of songs. Thus the song origin of the cult of Radha is strengthened without any doubt. The Manipuri Vaishnavas have been the most music community in connection with Radha literature and the Gita Govinda. Radha has been

deeply interwoven into the texture of daily life they have songs and mantras associated with every situation in life-in jest and sorrow.

As per the codes of Manipuri Vaishnavism various techniques are used at the time of Veda gana/chanting and Kirtan singing. Proper presentation is followed as the songs are meant to achieve spiritual goal.

The Gandharvas

Quite a number of references and legend about Gandharva custom, occupation and whereabouts have been recorded by ancient Indian Writers in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata although we have as yet to find out the living Gandharvas. All of our records have concluded that they were the singing race. They were celestial minstrels. In the Gita mention is made of the chiefs among whom Chitraratha is noted as the most supreme. A Gandharava was half man, half bird. They are descended from Brahma, the Lord of the creation and his daughter. According to research there was originally a single divinity but later on there were many. They were all male and were born as human being snakes. Their female counterparts were the Apsaras, connected with water in Vedic times but later translated into Heaven, the Gandharvas do not live in Heaven but inhabit the valleys and Gandhamadhan mountain. They are very fine looking and cause danger to the dancing girls/Apsaras. They have the culture of the sheep. Soma is a native of the plants where the Gandharvas lived. They are connected with 27 stars, city of mirage, again of air, sky or space, wind, rainbow and fertility.

In Buddhist literature they were depicted as a race of half-divine being and ranked same with the Asuras and Nagas In Buddhist thought they were treated as divine musicians and disturbed the monks and nuns in their silent meditation. In Hindu mythology they are treated as moral and social outcasts. They are a law unto themselves in morality. The Gandharvas along with the Kinnars (male dancer) and nymphs/Apsaras (female dancer) are spoken of with contempt by the codes of Manu.

How the Hindus came to assimilate the Gandharva's custom and practices like Gandharvas marriage in social life and Gandharvas Tala in music is a very interesting question.

One of the 8 forms of marriage is called Gandharvas Vivah named after the Gandharva. It is a kind of short cut marriage by consent of two parities which might be solemnised. This form was clandestine. It was respected by orthodox Hindus and allowed to the Kshetriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras and not to the Brahmans, the highest class.

Gandharva Tala-It is a kind of musical scale said to belong to Heaven only, thus showing the awareness of a superior type of music of the unfamiliar region.

Later Sanskrit writers like Kalidas in his **Raghuvamsa,** Bana in **Kadambari** and Visakhadata in Mudra Rakhasa used to refer to Gandharva monarch, their world and their characteristics.

Tradition of the Manipuris

The Manipuri tradition connected the people and the country of Manipur with the Gandharvas through the identification of present Manipur of the Mahabharata and the story of Arjuna's marriage with Chitrangada during his self-imposed exile and pilgrimage. It has been attempted that present Manipur was the land of the Gandharvas on the basis of the following points i) According to Sanskrit Poetic imagery there is no cuckoo in Gandharvas desha. In fact no cuckoo was seen in Manipur upto 1992. But its sound is being heard now on account of change of ecological conditions ii) The legend goes that Lord Siva and Parvati arrange a Rasa Dance in Manipur in which all gods and goddesses participated in the Dwapura age. Ananta, the serpent king illuminated it by the light of the Jewel. Hence the country came to be known as Manipur. Ananta was made the king by Lord Siva and Ananta handed over the charge of administration to a Saiva worshipping Gandharva.

The traditions and ***Puyas*** allude to a pedigree where some Gandharva kings reigned in Manipur at the end of Langachak (Treta Yuga), viz. Chitraketu, Chitradhwaja, Chitrabija, Chitrasarva, Chitravara, Chitrabhanu, etc. among whom Chitraketu, the successor of Ananta Shesha was noted as the master of music, dance and drumming. The gods were satisfied with his qualities and named his country as Gandharva Desha-which has been a by word for musical culture in the history of eastern and Indian civilisation. The people are of the same calibre as the celestial Gandharvas; their music and dance being of sophisticated nature.

A mark of Gandharva settlement and its confirmation in Manipur is to identify the Gandharvas with the Gandhars said to be a group of people in the north east of India. They are mentioned along with the Mujavants, Angas and Magadhas in the Atharva Veda, Srauta Sutra and Rig Veda.

Arjuna's marriage with princess Chitrangada, daughter of king Chitrabhanu and the birth of Babruvahana who became the king of Manipur and fight with Arjun in the Aswamedha episode in which Arjuna was killed-a legend became widely known in Hindu India. This has been gathered from these sources; i) Hindu literary sources, Jaimani Mahabharata, Bhavisya Purana and Bhagavat Purana, ii) Local Manipuri texts such as the Aswamedha Puya, Langoi Sagol Thaba (the setting free of a sacrificial horse of the Pandavas) incantations and martial arts-and iii) works of Manipur Indologists viz. Atombapu Sharma, W. Yumjao Singh and P. Parijat Singh of the 20th Century. Of Manipur's identification with the Manipur of the Mahabharata we cannot get a better description than Vishwakavi Rabindranath Tagore who has immortalised Manipuri Dance and Music in his play *Chitrangada.* All know it well that Dr. Kalidas Nag, the great Indologist Historian visited Manipur in 1930 and had experience of the great Manipuri dance and music from the celebrated Royal court of Manipur. He reported his testimony to poet Tagore who was too ill in his Ashram.

Modern Anthropologists and some schools of thought rejected the above identification and attempted to locate epic Manipur in Rawalpindi, Indus area in western India on Buddhist sources. It is however acknowledged in the scholastic world that from the very early times till the 17th Century, the Gandharvas were real and not imaginary and fictitious people.

Impact of Gandharva Veda on Manipuri Life

In our researches there are some points to suggest the impact.

1. A marriage quite close to Gandharva form of marriage is quite common in Manipur life. It is called Kanya Katpa-a form of marriage if the candidate is of the girl's choice. It is not elopement as contended by some critics. The couples do not live in the man's house but stay in the house of a relative on man's side. They do not co-habit.

The Gandharva form of marriage form the basis of many romantic tales and has given rise to one of the stock figures of later poetic convention and drama.-the **Abhisarika,** the girl. Here the girl silently leaves her father's home by night to meet her lover. Love stories of Manipuri goddesses viz. Nongpok Panthoibi, Phaoibi epic heroines like Thoibi (Durga), Yaithing Konu, etc. are meaning what the Hindu are describing as the Abhisarika type. Any action of the girls in leaving her parents' house without the consent of the parents is not regarded as morally reprehensible. There is no stigma attached to such practice since it was current during the age of the gods.

Later in Hindu phases of Manipuri culture we notice the Meiteis are in bringing home to the people the Abhisarika cult in Rasas like Kunja Rasa, Nartna Rasa and Vasanta Rasa. The demonstration is the finest we have from the episode when Radha and other Sakhis come out of the house stealthily without the knowledge of guardians. We have the picture of the gopis from the pen of the Vaishnava writer in the Bhagavata that the guardian tie her with rope to a post so that she may not leave the house for the dance of Krishna. She is the first to reach Krishna's place in her mind. The Gopis reached the bank of Jamuna river for the love dalliance with Krishna in an unorganised way according to modern convention. The attempt to go beyond convention means yearning for the Jiva to have union with God by transcending customs and tradition. It is a true symbol of Parakiya love which is well founded in literature and ballads of Manipur.

2. Manipur had the ancient tradition in music and musical items. It was cultivated by the harpers/fiddle players known as Ashibas in the court of the kings. These harpers are expert in manipulating the sound of string instrument known as pena. Real Manipur primitive music is in royal processions, war, rituals and Laiharaoba festival in every village and locality. There was a great wave for Hindu shastric music. They also sing mournful styles and love themes in Manipuri kings' court. King Chandrakriti in the beginning of the 19th Century had many vaishnava musicians in his court. This is because of Hindu influence in this time.

Imphal was the nerve centre of the world of Hindustani music. The dholak players sang the activities of Mahatma Gandhi in khongjom parva style.

They were styled as Gandharvas as they are known to have made many cultural innovations in the realm of music and dance. The *Puyas* traced the dance and music to god Samantha, Ragas and Raginis to the Laibangthous and Lainur-as. The beginning of musical ideas began from the creation of the world itself. Details of the construction of pena and drum from the hides of the cow are given, the flute, pung, pena have divine origins. Like the Gandharvas they are well versed in music as well as in marital arts and war techniques. The Meitei puya goes that God konjin created man after the appearance and shadow of Almighty God. The vatic myths speak of Gandharvas as coming out of kranti of Brahma.

3. Meities are traced to the Magoloid group. Aryan elements cant be completely ruled out. They believed themselves as the descendant of the Almighty, the most excellent Guru. Again some scholars of Manipuri Sanskritists pointed out the similarities between Sanskrit and the Meitei Language. Sanskrit must also be the language of the Gandharvas on grounds of Hindu mythology. According to them the forefathers have migrated eastward and settled in Manipur. They presume that the distant forefathers lived in the Himalaya or Tibet.

There is no trace of Gandharva tribe in pre-Hindu literary records and Archaeological grounds/inscription. But they have been clearly mentioned in the records of the 18th century.

Abstract of the Paper

The Samavedic Visa Vis Gandharva upavedic tradition and culture in Manipur.

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Indian music is said to have its origin in sama Vedic chants. As the belief goes, next comes the period of Gandharva upaveda whose celestial minstrels achieved excellence for their vocal music along with various instruments.

In the present paper an attempt is made by the author to show the Manipuri's special aptitude for music and dance. Through these ages like them, they worship their deities by singing songs and playing on instruments. The Gandhavra influence is highlighted by an analysis of dance, kirtan singing, sources as well as the features of the people.

A critical evaluation based on references and tradition and cultural characteristics of the people is also provided for further research. To sum up it can be observed that the Meities are living embodiments of Gandharva Vedic culture in comparison to those of other people of India.

Conclusion

The author has the following observations.

1. Gandharva Veda being a continuation of Samaveda must be studied along with Samaveda and Chanda (poetic metre) shastra for music of India.

2. The singers of Samaveda are rarely found. The store house Samavedic chants along with the musical frame work of must be preserved and tape recorded as a national treasure and heritage. The musical tradition must not be allowed to be extinct in India' (including Manipur) by our sheer indifference.

3. They are like the Gandharvas and not actual Gandharvas of Hindu Shastra. The uncertainty go Gandharva with Gandharva is further confused owing to the absence of Archaeological evidence, carving, etc. in this part of India.

4. The public must be real patrons of traditional music. Institutions like AIR, the Gramphone Company and T.V. must help traditional music practitioners. They should figure in plays in broadcast. Patronage of music has passed from the Aristocratic to corporate bodies.

5. The controversy as to the exact location of the Mahabharata Manipur still persists. The Meitei-Aryan identity or Meitei-Gandharva identity has been questioned by modern Anthropologists and historians on blood grounds. The tradition. The same appears in the history when the impact of Sanskrit was too strong. The name Gandharvas was applied to the stock of people of this land in view of their excellence in music and dance as well as for skill and heroism both of which they regarded as their 2 eyes for their usefulness and way of life. This land was very fortunate in giving birth to a number of teacher with the grace of Shri Govindaji. The kings, queens and nobles of Manipur used to take part in Kirtan. The position of a simple singer was elevated enough in the society. The traditional pala singer and artists have interpretative existence out of local needs. Institutions like Manipuri Palace must be encouraged in this time. The listeners being products of a restless age lack the discipline and equipment necessary for hearing Samavedic gana and Gandharva Vedic arts.

Notes And References

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3. Dr. Y. Bheigya Singh, **Samaveda (Agneya Parva, Indriya Parva) Amusing Meitei Laining,** Imphal, 1987.
4. Atombapu Sharma, **Meitei Kirtan,** P.P. 256-58, Imphal 1955
5. P. Parijat Singh, **Manipur Puravritta,** PP 1-11 Imphal 1985.
6. If the present flora and faua provided a contract I can see cakoos flying and crying on the trees of Umang lai groves (Nambo, Khoripha, Changing Leema, tie) and in my own garden. So the observation made by the ancient writers cannot strike us to be true for all time.

14

Problems of Writing a Composite History of Manipur

Manipur has not only preserved her historical sources spreading out of the crater of the volcanic eruptions of the hottest times of the 18th and 19th centuries, but also got their coins and associated with the spelling threads of religion, adored her head and heart with them so nicely that modern world is gazing at her with admiration. Manipuri language and literature owns the honour to bear with it a number of works of Sanskrit India, many in original, but in Bengali or Devanagri character and more in translations and adaptations. It is the right time for us to construct a composite history of Manipur in the light of acts and evidences. The problems cover a vast range, i.e. from identification of personalities (such as Poireiton, king Naothingkhong, etc.), nature of the impacts of invaders (like the Tais/Shans, Burmese, etc.), to the fixing of dates/eras and authorship of such works as **Poireiton Khunthokpa, Niththourol Lambuba,** etc. The etymology of terms and the identity of castes or tribes are puzzling to some scholars, who have set a wrong theory about a proposed composite history. I will discuss what in my opinion, were the problems arising from the following : (1) Scarcity of dependable materials, (2) Ignorance, (3) Injustice, (4) Mythological character of history and (5) Difficulties in translating the Puranas into English/Hindi. Perhaps, these points were chosen at random and not meant as a complete list which needs re-thinking.

(1) Scarcity of dependable materials : A historian of Manipur has been confined to certain records which are fragmentary and second-hand. It is difficult to find intrinsically dependable sources since they differ from each other in spite of having the same title and subject. Some of them are of doubtful authority from the historical point of view. There are problems, also, some of these being insufficient materials and our inability to get in touch with ancient books.

Among the contributions made by the court pundits and the astrologers of the 18th century the most valuable ones are the establishment of the chronology of the Ningthouja rulers, the ascertainment of the dates of their life and historical events right from this time to the time of Maharaja Bodhachandra, The attempt is based on Hindu calendar system and **Sakabda era**

Now the question is how far the traditional history and episodes are confirmed by the evidence of archaeology and epigraphy. We are unable to identify the culture with certain names of the tribes as depicted in the Puranas. To this can be added the drawbacks which had been caused by dearth of archaeological evidence. It cannot revolutionise much of our

historical data. We have no tablets except some hand-made pottery and graves.

In spite of the remarkable progress in science and technology and the consequent addition to our advantage in the shape of Zerox, Photostat copies and psychostilling of important files, documents and rare books, man is still a victim of artificial barriers and indulgence. It is no wonder that deliberate concealment and destruction an profiteering not only by individuals but by the community and the nations land us in confusion. In the past we have seen that one clan/group had an inclination for absorbing other clans/families/tribes. Some of them made attempts for bringing other principalities under their influence. Further, the tendency to glorify a cult or a ruler at the expense of the rest is very old and natural. This was the case with the history of clans/tribes of Manipur in the 18th century.

(2) Ignorance-Though the modern men are well informed, their problems are on the increase rather than on the decrease. It implies some basic error with their understanding of problems. Ignorance of going to the originals of Meitei texts, studying Meitei Scripts, Loi dialects and tribal dialects hamper our research.

Do our writers and historians study the Puranas written in Meitei script and scrutinise the contents ? As for example. there are scores of genealogies, long and short in the **Salairons,** royal *Puyas* and chronicles. Most people don's bother to read them, but skip them as unimportant. But the lines giving the genealogy are vital, bones of our history and make it stand as books of facts, historical facts, not fables or fancies. How many generations of our own family can any of us name ? Genealogies are always reckoned backwards. They reveal only the generations past. In some case we are told that a particular line would continue that a great man would be born into it. Our **Singkak** puran was special in that future happenings were predicted. It uses the future tense for the subsequent dynasties.

Our ignorance of the study of the tribal and Loi dialects is one the defects of our historical research. In every nation or society there is not only one but several languages/dialects-one for the higher section and the rest for the common men. We had dialects for the Loi groups and 29 groups of the tribals which made an enormous contribution to our cultural heritage. Our history and culture did not start when the Ning-thouja dynasty became the ruler of Manipur valley or the Aryans or the **Nongchip Haram** came to Manipur in different historical times, but long before, at the time of human settlement. Since that time many years have passed and many racial groups contributed to our civilizaion. We believe in the continuity of our cultural history which can be traced back even before the first century A.D.

The way for a correct picture of our cultural history is to study intensively the Loi and the tribal dialects of Manipur although the attempts are not successful. We may cite an instance of Rev. William Pettigrew, the enlightened Christian missionary who evinced great interest in the study of the Meiteis, Loi, Tengkhul and Thadou dialects. It was he who translated

New Testament into Manipuri and compiled Meitei Grammar, Tangkhul Grammar and Dictionary for the first time. He was responsible for the system of transliterating Tangkhul and Thadou words in English characters by the use of diacritical marks as a mark of which persons unacquainted with their characters could write and read Tangkhul and Thadou dialects in **English script.**

Very recently some pioneer and research books run into second or third additions. The people speaking these languages came nearer to each other through his researches. Some of the Manipuri scholars have been working for the last 30 years but still we seem to be where we were by the time of William Pettigrew and the Christian missionaries. The great handicap was one of complete ignorance of tribal or heritage in non-documentary forms. We should pursue our historical research further through clear knowledge of the neglected people. For this purpose the topography of their areas had to be studies and visit to the scheduled caste and tribe areas become necessary for field investigation.

(3) Injustice to historical personalities and events-The injustice is seen in individual as well as in political life. It is connected with baser instincts of man, anger, pride and hypocrisy of men. The results are frustrations in individuals of the people and war in social and political levels. Social divisions, caste distinctions, have been the features of Manipur in pre-colonial and post colonial-periods.

History is made by human beings either individually or jointly. Court pandits were engaged in writing history which they hoped might be a masterpiece. One writer is deadly against another out of enmity and may dedicate his manuscript to fire or concealed under the ground. So we may be deprived of the valuable works. The early writings of Manipuri History have not escaped bias and dishonesty. Some writers have not done justice to the personalities of the chiefs of such salais/clans/tribes who did for their group or land and to whom the historians hypnotised by the rulers of kanglei (Imphal centre) ignored. The foreign account is going credence by the fact that any work form Kanglei came off precisely. Why names of other clans and those should be blocked out is anybody's doubt.

At times facts are presented in communal colours. There were several attempts for the disintegration of some powerful salais such as the Luwangs, the Angoms, etc. in different periods. The other salais drawn together by common enmity against a particular Salai, i.e. Moirang had formed alliances. By about 1449 Sakabda,— 1469 the Angoms were very powerful; Angoms king Loiyanganba was so obstinate as to kill five kings of the Ningthouja dynasty along with his own paramour the widowed queen mother of Noingin phaba. If he so wished he could have annexed the territories of the Ningthouja. By the time of king Naothingkhong the Ningthoujas succeeded in annihilating the kingly line of the Angoms. There was a serious draught in the country. The practice of worshipping a **lingam** by an Angom chief as rain compelling ceremony was prevalent in Manipur

with a mystical vein. One little boy, royal family of the Angom was secretly hidden away in the forest of Nongmaiching Hill. In due course he was found out for the ritual, crowned as Angom King by the Ningthouja king. Thus the dynasty of the Angom survived.

The Scars of the ravages of the Moirangs by the Meities are visible even today as raised mounds at Moirangkhom. We are familiar with the episode of the destruction of our sacred scriptures by Maharaja Pamheiba at the instance of Santidas Babaji and by the British authority after their victory in the war of 1891. These are but the attempts of the ambitious rulers to put an end to the trace of the earlier regime. Some rulers of a particular line revealed their blackness of their heart by open display of spite and venom against their predecessors.

Of special interest in this context is the prejudice of British officers about the events of Manipur. There are British Historians who have preferred to call 1891 upheavals, Kuki rebellion as a revolt of 1891 and a rebellion of 1918-19. Our local historians call these historic events as move for freedom or war of independence. The British have shown an inclination to present Tikendrajit or Jadonang as more a local chiefs or rebels against them. It must be our duty to expose the misinterpretations and restore their status. They are patriots and nationalists of the highest order who believed in Supra-linguistic consideration. Writing of regional history is a difficult one. No one has any right to give a distorted view even unconsciously.

(4) Association of History with Mythology and Superstition

Mythology for the Meities is a living one and not a mere story. The early texts have daubed the image of historical personalities in order to emphasise the importance of a particular sect or region. The scholastic dogma overwhelmed the original writings. From the scrutiny of our records we see that some of the kings of the Christian era are said to have reigned for 120 or 100 years. The writers are apt to attribute miracles to some people of Christian era, the purpose of which the critical observers could not understand in the scientific context. The Meiteis still believe in the demi-gods and moral gurus (Mangang, Khumal and Luwang). The myths mention that the great kings, pandits even now live as trees in different parts of the valley. It is open to them to take any forms as **Chiranjivis.** Some believe that Tikendrajit Yubraz (a warrior prince who was hanged by the British for his heroic deeds) lives to-day in a scheduled place.

Very often the question is asked whether such beliefs or writings are historical or not ? The historians are divided in their opinions. There is the modern western theory according to which legendary, fictitious and mythological materials are not historical dates. They try to weaken and minimise their value by studying coins, inscriptions and Archaeological date which were inaugurated recently.

As against the above, we have the method of the local scholars who accepted the myths and legends since they throw light upon the pre-historic and darker periods of our history.

During the time of World War II the Western world was fascinated by the strategic importance of Manipur as the field of war. England has to give wide publicity about the history and culture of Manipur to the world. The then president of Manipur State Durbar entrusted the work of submitting an authentic report to three local scholars of Manipur. Instead of sending the report to England he forwarded the same to Mr. G. Zimpson, Political Agent for his comment. The Political Agent challenges the report on many grounds saying that the Meiteis are not the descendants of Arjuna and Manipur is not that of the Mahabharata. Mythology, in his estimate has nothing to do with the research of the scholars of London. The theory of the local scholars, he concludes, is framed after the Hindunisation of Meitei community, much of which imaginary and product of the 18th century. The British attitude is emphatic in holding that the kingdom would have been thrown the scrap heap of history by the rising Burmese power had not the rulers maintained their position with the help of the British. They kept the Maharaja in power after 1891 as a reservoir of strength in the event of anti-British outburst. We know that the Maharaja was subject to the control of the British Political Agent and through him the governor of Assam and Viceroy of India. His stand as the representative of British Crown reversed the international appreciation of the greatness of Manipur. However his comment is sound as modern scientific theory, it must be remembered that tends to confirm it.

Another event of satisfaction to us is that Mr. Zimpson, out of his love for the Manipuris, donated the Sum of Rs. 10,000 for the printing of our royal chronicle, **Cheitharol Kumbaba.** His wish is not destined to be fulfilled as the bank evaded payment of the amount after the destruction of connected documents during World War II.

(5) Decipherment of Meitei Script and translation of **Meitei Puranas** in English and Hindi;-for the history of Manipur the script and the materials written in it are bound to be important as it opened up a vast field for research on the dialect, language and culture. The authors of Meitei civilisation evolved the alphabetic writing without any racial prejudice and difference between the **Salais** and the **Lois** (scheduled caste). The post-Garibniwaz period suffered a decline in the culture of Meitei script and vernacular songs though the royal pandits continued to use it so much so that it is now possible to trace its evolution from time to time. Our point is that Meitei script did not die a sudden death but survived for so many centuries since its beginning.

There are certain problems in studying the script, the important ones being the abundance of NG sounds, the absence of many vowel signs (except A), absence of many S and loan words from Sanskrit-Bengali letters in the pre-Vaishnava documents and Puranas. A good number of Pandits have been devoting on reading and writing it under the able Maharajas and produced with the task of inventing their own letters, signs and numbers. The existing schools, such as those of Pandit Loisang (Maharaja's palace),

Meitei Marup (revivalist group), and those belonging to the **Loi** (degraded) areas and their diverse works created some confusion in the mind of the aspirants and research scholars.

The difficulty was enhanced by the continuous writing of the Puranas without any breaking of the theme into paragraphs, inseparable words and absence of some punctuation marks and indexes. The work of translation of the Puranas from Manipuri into English/Hindi must be our cherished task. The risk of reconstructing a cultural history by a non-Manipuri is formidable in connection with the idiaoms, phrases, peculiar costoms and traditions of the people. Some of the pioneer works are inaccurate full of misunderstanding although the models or primrose, Pietigrew and T.C. Hodson is of superior quality in certain respects. Inspite of care and deliberation it is still doubtful whether a hundred per cent translation of the original work (say, **Cheitharol Kumbaba** or **Moirang Ningthoural Lambuba,** etc.) is possible in view of its archaic nature.

We have also a number of texts which are replete with diagrams and in-cantations (**Thengourols**/treatise on the forms of snake-god Pakhangba) written in Meitei scripts. No **guru** or **Maiba** would accept translation of them in any other language, as the contents have a phonetic and recital importance. Some of the pandits have edited and given the archaic languages into modern Manipuri with utmost differences. A continuous effort and collaboration of scholars with the background of indology may enable us to realise the goal and convert the impossible into possible. At present, we have pundits who deciphered the script and published them easily readable Bangala. Any minor alteration, deletion or addition in any shape arising from the natures of the language or the limitations of the translators may be condoned, if there are no distortion of facts or deliberate omissions.

We may observe that the above defects can be removed by a sort of training in the medium of old language in the college/school level. For this purpose historical/indological terminology has to be coined and approved and a comprehensive Dictionary has to be compiled and published by the authority. Students and researchers with this background must be confident to carry on this task including the translation and restoration of a Meitei Purana into a worthy language, i.e. English or Hindi.

One more point in this connection is that most of the Bengali editions of **Meitei *Puyas*** by our pundits are limited to dating and fixing of the time of the writers. They have avoided being critical and scholastic with respect to early texts. The result has been that we rarely meet with comparative studies; and never with interpretations. We should interpret the contents with effectiveness not to the Manipuris but to the world. To my mind this will be more attractive than the present attempt of our writers and scholars.

As for the tribal people, we have no clue for written materials till the introduction of Roman script by different Christian missionaries in the colonial period. The absence of a definite chronology is another problem

for us. But it need not be the most important one in so far as the social and cultural history is concerned. We can solve it from such sources as folk-tales, legends, myths (published and unpublished) and on field studies and interviews. In any research work for the tribal region done in the face of odds, much is to be discounted. Before I conclude I would like to offer the following suggestions for further action.

1. To overcome the difficulties the concerted effort of dedicated and sincere workers is a norm. We do not wish to see a work through the commentators. We are concerned not so much with the secondary sources or other's judgements as with the study of original sources themselves. The same presupposes a knowledge of old language and the Meitei Script in which they are written. Hence for the researchers it is necessary to attain proficiency in Meitei Script and Language.

2. To direct the activities of research scholars to keep alive the tradition of compiling chronicles in Meitei Script which is decreasing every generation and to popularise the historical studies among the masses. The pandit who does so must be given prizes and a recognition through titles and other possible facilities.

3. Study and exploration of available sources (living remnants of all tribes and castes) not only from the literary points of view but also from the inter-disciplinary angles in terms of their impact on the arts and culture of the country.

4. Institutions of Chairs of historical studies in Manipur University.

5. Establishment of a publication fund for historical research in Manipur and Adjoining Areas.

6. Establishment of a MSS Library with annoted catalogues.

The archaeology, museum and archive departments of the state are still in their infant state although they have some historical materials. Their functions are as yet to acquire materials in an orderly manner and to preserve in a consultative manners, to bring out publications and journals and to catalogue maps, seals and microfilms in their custody, so that the general public can form glimpse of them.

Vast wealth lie concealed in private possession and collection of some associations. Efforts must be made to acquire the MSS which lie the private collection of eminent personalities, noteworthy among them being the collections of Moirang Thabal Pandit Achouba (Hingchabi), Amakchamba Pandit Chaoba of Uchekon, Laikhram Pandit Suryaboro, famous physicians (**Meitei Maibas**), royal **panjis** (astrologers), noteworthy gurus of music, dance and pena (fiddle) and others relating to political leaders like H. Irabot Singh, Lalita Madhop Sharma and L. Ibungohal Singh. We have also instances where the associations (Rajkumar Association etc.) posses fine records on the genealogical and heraldic works of their groups/ classes.

Notes and References

1. Critical attitude of source materials about Manipur was expressed by Prof. Dr. M.Neog, Gauladi when I worked under him for Ph. During 1969-72
2. Being a life number of Indian Archivist Association, I attended the session and expressed the desirability of reading the text in a comparative and comprehensive way.
3. My research studies

15

LITERARY AND CULTURAL IMPLICATION OF SHAKTI WORSHIP IN MANIPUR

Introduction

Worship of god is the form of Divine mother prevailed in many countries such as Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, Greece, Sumerian and Indus valley civilisation. The cult of mother goddess as evolved in India was mainly contributed by Tibetian Bon cultures aboriginal belief of the hill tribes of the Himalayas and pre-Hindu cults of many village goddesses in many parts of India through various syncretic process like identification, synonymisation, and subordination with Hindu Aryan culture. Manipur is one of the few states of North Eastern Indian of whose relying belief and culture had its contact with India and have been taken up for critical studies. The essay is an attempt to show the rise and growth of Saktism, merging Hindu concepts with pre-Hindu concepts, peculiar features of the same in the sacred soil of Manipur. Mother cult as an aspect of thought is expressed in philosophy, items of fine arts, rituals, etc.

Saktism in ancient period – Rain and agriculture laid the foundation of civilisation in every part of the world. Mother goddess has close association with fertility, vegetation and crops. The presiding divinities are workshipped by the Meiteis/Manipuries under the name of Panthoibi (Corn-deity) which had dramatic character in lore, written literature, etc. The goddess as female energy is known to them under various names such as Leimarel, (Earth goddess), Thumgong Lairema (goddess of Salt mines), Lanleima (goddess of wealth), Sinleima (goddess of work), and 7 **Heloies** (witches). In Meitei belief there are concepts of **Atiya guru** (father god) and Leimarel (Earth Goddess, Empress) since early times. The consort goddess of early times known as **Lairembies,** wives of **Umanglais** number about 140 and have provided the basis for the popularity of mother cult. The specialists in Meitei lore enumerate further names for the Mother goddess under such titles and attributes as Panthoibi, Kalika, Soubon Lairema, Nongthang Leima goddess of lightning, Leinaotabi, Laikhurembi (goddess having extra hands), etc. in different periods of its thought. Religion and socio-cultural activities revolve round the goddess whose shrines adorn most of the Meitei villages.

Evolution in Saktism– King Khuyoi Tompok (154-264) was a worshipper of Laikhurembi (goddess having extra hands). Further evidence from a text called **Pakhangba Nongarol** has been seen in the worship of Devi by Khui Ningomba (364-379) and his son king Pengsiba (379-394 A.D.) with the sacrifice of white goats and white **Pangong** (a kind of arum)

flowers. It is already pointed out that Siva-Sakti cult along with Vaisnavism effected an entry in Manipuri life by the time of king Khongtekcha (8th Century A.D.) Khutningthou and Khuleima-stone representation of god and goddess in Kangla were identified with Siva and Durga. Into the vortex of this cult were drawn not only the cults of mother of 7 salais (clans) and 7 types of **Kalikas/** goddess of **Umanglais** (Hangun Kalika, Tongkham Kalika, Napet Pali Kalika, Thongam Mondum Kalika, and Laphupat Kalika), cult of further Kalikas (such as wife of god Kakching Khamlanga and Bamon Kampu Kalika).

In royal diary, **Chitharol Kumbaba** we had the first recorded **Kyong** (temple) in 1686 and her first recorded idol in 1699. King Charairongba built two Kali temples of brick in 1706 and another in 1707. A Burmese architect was in charge of constructing them. One of them collapsed due to defective construction. It was however re-built up. Another Kali temple was burnt down along with other thatched buildings in an accidental fire. We can notice some changes of their cult during the time of his son Maharaja Pamheiba (1709-1749). At the instance of a powerful **Ramandi** Tantrik preacher called Shantidas Mahanta, the king began his religious persecution by burning up Manu ancient Puranas, and breaking idols including that of Panthoibi and pulling down the temples. The witty preacher saw bad omens in his dream and scenting further danger in his life, he invented Hindu Puranic stories to connect local culture with trends of Hindu thought. We know for certain that identification of this land with the Manipur of **Mahabharate,** Hiyangthang shrine with one of the time of **Daksa Yajna,** calling of this land by **Mekhele desa** dedication of temples to Devi at Heibok hill, Police lane/ Moirangkhom which are radiating centres. Manipur's familiarity with the cult of Durga, Kamakhya from Assam and Bengal managed to effect an entry into Manipur. This led to the rapid assimilation of the two trends/creeds to each other, development of Saktism and tantrism along with the Hindunisation of Meitei community under the rulers of Manipur Maharaja Chandrakirti introduced the festival of Durga Puja in a pompous way consisting of **Lairema dhumel** (drum movement), and offering of milk of 108 cows. He dedicated one temple to Devi in Ziri in 1868.

Sakta Literature

The Manipuri lore contains a number of hymns addressed to the different female deities which are the manifestations of Mother Earth. The various aspects of mother cult, its ramification in the valley; peoples' experiments and rituals are presented fairly. In the 8th century A.D. arose a whole body of literature, epigraphy and institution connected with this cult. Goddess Panthoibi is the counterpart of Durga in Manipuri mythology. In the ballad of **Numit Kappa** (shooting the sun) goddess Panthoibi is described as an errand girl. She was sent by the gods to request the sun god to come out of hiding. The copper plate of the 8th century A.D. at Phayeng

(Scheduled caste village) includes worship of Devi along with Visnu Siva, Ganesh and Hindu Puranic gods according to Puranic method of worship.

The important Sakta text of the early Meitei belief is the **Panthoibi Khongun** (foot prints of goddess Panthoibi) written by an unnamed author in many lines that spread into 5 chapters. The treaties describing lore, offering of Panthoibi and her elopement with a sacred lover Nangpok Ningthou duel between Khaba and Nongpok ascribed to the 8th Century A.D. (according to some 17th century prior to the reign of Pamheiba Maharaja). By the time of writing this book, goddess Panthoibi attained the status of a war goddess. Like Devi she was the combined energy of all the gods.

Panthoibi was the daughter of the chief of Loijing hill in the western side of Imphal. She felt in love with a powerful person called Nongpok Ningthou, king of the eastern hills in a jhum land Since that time they lived apart, there was no chance for marriage. The parents of the girl gave her in marriage with one khaba Tarung Khoinucha of the ruling family of Kanglei (Imphal Centre). In her husbands' home she proved herself to be a goddess of plenty and showed many miracles. As a housewife she was bad enough an account of her secret relations with a lover who visited her from time to time in the form of a Tangkhul Naga hunter. When she was living in the house of Khaba she was worried on the separation from her secret lover and addressed songs which symbolise the separation of the individual soul from the universal soul. In the meantime her father-in-law noticed her character.

As the legally married life of Khaba, goddess Panthoibi could not elope with her lover (before marriage) At last they fixed a date for meeting. She was unhappy with her relatives and left the house one day. On the way she met her lover who eloped with her to his home on Nongmaiching hill. Then Khaba chased her following the footprints. At last Khaba realised that Panthoibi was a goddess and preserved the comb with hair along with clothes.

Nongpok Ningthou and Panthoibi lived in Nongmaiching hill as husband and wife. All gods and goddesses visited them and praised/extolled her acknowledging her as a king of gods. Panthoibi's former father-in-law and mother-in-law bowed down to them and visited their place. At their prayer, Nongpok and Panthoibi visited their house and honoured the stone erected for their purpose. Her attributes are recited by the priest at the time of her puja.

The purpose of **Laiharaoba** (marry making of gods), the core of ancient Manipuri culture is the enactment of **lila** of these god and goddess-Siva and Parvati of the early Meitei pantheon. Only in Manipur and not in any part of India. Siva and Parvati are worshipped in the **Parakiya Bhava/Rasa.** This work has become very popular among the people in the early stages.

The text refers to her as the feminine form although she took both the aspects of the father and the mother. The writer remains content with

describing her as having 2 arms with a sword and a shield. She appears as a different picture since there is no reference of her being the mother of a god or goddess. Her cult is characterised by the above absence. As far as I know the virgin form independent of male principle is absent in Manipur.

Leithak Leikharol : The Scholars are inclined to give the time of its composition after 1606 A.D. By this time Manipur's association with Hindu **puranas** and **tantric** idea got the upper hand. This text contains a story how goddess Panthoibi kills demon after the pattern of **Markandeya Chandi.** She killed him by using the gruesome technique of spreading her tongue to cover the entire battlefield. She by her terrible form killed/vanquished the demon on her tongue and licked up the falling of drops of Rakta vija's blood. Whence new Raktabijas like demon sprouted.

We have a number of indigenous manuscripts written in Meitei made paper now preserved in the **Pandit Loisang** (court of great scholars) of the king and in individual possession of the pandits. Most of the mss on Saktism and tantrism have been edited and published to throw light this cult not only in Manipur but also in the whole of India. Mss collected from the Manipuris living in Bangladesh and parts of Burma must not lead us to think that the practice and principals in the works have a limited significance alone.

Manipuri Scholars, artists and physicians went to different places for collection of mantras, study, exchange and demonstration of their sadhana on a global basis.

Sakta literature from Sanskrit and Bengali sources reached Manipur through the arrival of Brahmans, tantrics and traders from Bengle, Assam and U.P. By the 17th century, the Manipuri Hindus were aware of Sakta texts such as **Durga Saptasati, Sri Chandi, Divi Bhagavat, Kamakhya tantra, Mahanirvan tantra, Kalika Purana,** etc. Hindu Puranas containing the prayers and manifold aspects of Sakti, the Bengali version of **Kritivas Ramayana** showing the Rama's worship of Devi, Mahiravana's exploits and Vasmalochana provided the basis for further culture of saktism. The metaphysical aspect of sakti worship was dealt with by the learned Hindu Brahmans of the kings' court. The magical side was practised by the physicians and the aspirant for the throne of a responsible post. Most of the treatises on medicines, dance and charm are in the form of dialogue between Siva and Durga.

The Scholars and great pandits composed verses and wrote short manuals in connection with the worship of female deity. But Manipur did not produce poet sadhok of considerable fame and standing. The **Asheibas** (lyricists poet singers) were apt to treat every talented woman (such as Princess Thoibi of Moirang epic) as an incarnation of Devi/Panthoibi according to their over religious temperament and tradition. Thoibi or Panthoibi and Durga are not two different personalities but one and the same born at different point of time.

Sakta Sadhak— Mention may be made of noted Sakta sadhaks such as Maharani Induprabha, Nongmaijing Vaisnavi, Paona Brajavasi, etc. who were fine products of mixing up Bengal Vaisnavism with saktism in the latter part of the 19th century. Some of the kings such as Chaurajit (1806-1813), king Chandrakirti (1850-1988), linked up with the worship of Devi in Hiyanghthang and Nongmaiching hill (Devi kund of Nilakantha giri) to the east of Imphal. Sakta sadhak was very popular among the warriors and ambitious Rajkumars of Manipur. Sakta sects such as Right hand, left hand the **kaula** (extreme worshipper) were not in existence here as in the case of Bengal and Assam.

Princess Induprabha was the daughter of Maharaja Modhuchandra (1801-1803). She was given in marriage to Cachar king Krishnachandra (1780-1813) and was made the Maharani. Govinda chandra, younger brother of the deceased king succeeded him and remarried the sister-in-law according to Cacher custom by which the brother can marry the sister-in-law of the deceased king. She was again made the queen. Being an ardent worshipper of Devi since her childhood she had the vision of 10 armed Durga entrusting her to prepare the image of metal at Kashidham from where it was to be brought back to Cachar for royal seva. Two Brahmans were appointed for the daily seva of Devi at a magnificent temple. After the death of Govindachandra, Maharani Induprabha, the candidate for the throne of Cachar, continued her dedicated devotion to her **Itsa Devata** Devi for the rest of her life. The image founded by her is still worshipped by the descendants of the **sebait** with great sare. Individual sadhok like Nongmaijing Vaishnavi (lady) and Chingakham Sanajaoba, the ring leader of Kuki rebellion 1919, are known to wear **Rudraksha mala,** to print their forehead with vermilion and to wear scarlet silk or cotton cloth dyed with red colour. Manipuri maibas physicians used Devi yantra of brass or copper and worshipped naked image of female deity under the names of Kali, Durga, Yogini, Ulka Devi, etc. Maharaja Chandrakirti although a staunch vaisnava is reported to practise saktism at a cremation ground during his stay in Cachar. Manipuri physicians are well versed in **Kumari Puja, Bhairavi Chakra, Lata Sadhana.** There is belief that one who undertakes the sadhana that fail to go through the final programme, became the invoices and heighten the glory of those who had accomplished the feat of sadhana before sun rise. It was the preserve of a few traditional physicians. There was the fear that sadhana might be misused and misinterpreted by some people with little learning the practice was not free form abusive and gross misunderstanding, such as homicide before the goddess as the acceptable offering, use of wine and sacrifice of animals. The Manipuris under the order of the vaisnava king made it a point to worship in exactly the same manner as the vaisnava who conducted the sadhana by offering coconut water, sugarcane, flowers and fruits. Most of them follow the householder's life and did not practise mendicant's life.

It is common practice for the Manipuris to add to the names of ladies the suffix, Devi as a sign of attachment to the deity. Every woman is treated as an incarnation of Devi in their belief. The land of Manipur/**Meitei Laipak** was looked upon as a goddess which demanded/commented respect and love of the sons.

Signs of impressive Sakti sadhana are evident throughout the lives of ancient Meitei Sadhaks-in their culture of human body as the microcosm of macros, world affirming conquest of neighbouring lands, meditation of presiding deities in different centre of divine consciousness, awakening of **paphal** (a variant of kundalini/coiled devine energy, masterly of sense organs, etc. Meitei conception of **Cakras** and petals and of awakening the serpent power appear to be indigenous and worth studying.

Cult of Hingchabi (Vampire)

Saktism in this part of India will be incomplete without reference to a belief in the cult of **Hingchabi** (Hing=Raw, Chabi=to eat), a class of physical women who can project their astral bodies to enter into the body of those persons male and females including the Hindu Brahmans. The belief widely current that Panthoibi (Durga) worked through the ill man/victim by making them utter phenomena, method of treatment with puja, etc. It is a peculiar feature that a woman in whose body the Hingchabi resides may not even be aware of her attack upon somebody or put an evil eye upon a victim. She lives a normal life with her husband and children although the victim mentions her name in his utterances. A **hignchabi's** daughter also becomes a hingchabi by hereditary. Agirl from the Ukhongsang village or a family of Sarang them; Samchetsabam, etc. is thought to be so as per the institution of **Akoksa** (evil eye). If a child cries with pain, dies sudden without knowing the nature of disease, if a people cannot walk properly the family may suspect that a **ngakra lai/** coming from **Ngakra** fish the favourite fish of Devi has worked on him/her. Meitei folk lore describes **hingchabi** as the agent of Devi who live by attacking the people. In the peoples belief the **maiba** (physician) can diagnose such problems arising from the illness of his nature. A **hingchabi** is different from a material vampire who lives by eating human flesh or animals. The method of treatment of such illness is the worship of Panthoibi/Durga by uttering the history of the origin of **Akoksa** institution, and offering of the puja materials as prescribed by the goddess through the ravings of the victim. **Ngakra fish** (Magur) is a favourite offering to goddess Devi. Manipuri physician (Maibas) tried to cure this disease by the use of *Panthoibi Naherol* (in Manipuri) or seed mantra of Kamakhya Jantra. Physicians of Manipuri particularly of pre-vaisnava/Hindu practice and to detect **Hingchavi** by worshipping the grave of **Moydana Hingchaba** (a giant from the border of China) with a fragment of stone lying over its grave.

Saktism in Iconography and Sculpture

From the above discussion it is clear that the images or icons of mother goddess can be categorised under two heads, ancient Meitei type and Hindu

type. In the former aspect mother goddess representation is free from Hindu influence. Mythologies developed round her themes or ideal lovers, 2 arms holding a sword and a shield, wearing Meitiei **Phanek** lower garment of ladies) and riding a tiger. Most of the images of the form of different goddess must illustrate the stories are-counted in sacred Meitei texts. But worship of deities in human form can be dated after the 17th century.

It is but natural that many varieties of Devi icon and stone images should be found in this part. The stone image as **Khulleima** in the khunthokyai of Kangla which reminds us of yoni was shifted to **Ningthem Pukhri Mapan** (Near the royal tank in Wangkhei) from the original site in 1725 by order of Maharaja Pamheiba alias Garibaniwaz. It has not hands and feet and looks like a female emblem when seen form the back side. It cannot be easily carried by 3 men. In 1851 the image was again carried to the palace Durbar Hall on every first day of Mera/Sept-October which is known as Mera Chaorel Houba with Devi Puja programme.

The worship of deity was interested to the care of the members of **Sairem family**, Yoni emblem at Chameirembi hill 4 arms stone image of Durga of the time of Churachand Maharaja, stone image of Kali (supposed to be set up in 1725-26), black stone and ten armed Durga made of clay have been unearthed in different parts of Imphal valley. These figures can be seen in the shrines, temples and hills. The brone image which is being looked after by Aribam family and Sagolsem family under the name of **Lairemas** (goddess) is of the time of king Charairongba. Making of clay images of 10 armed Durga in Durga puja made their appearance during the time of Maharaja Chandrakirt Singh. The sculptures or idol makers depicted her with 10 arms holding 10 weapons engaged in combat with Mahesa in the shape of a buffalo with 2 sons-Ganesh and karttika and 2 daughters, Lakshmi and Saraswati and lion beneath her that come. This aspect represents the artistic excellence that came to grip the art form of Manipur towards the 18th and 19th centuries. A.D. The development of Meitei fine arts like painting, sculpture cannot be assessed without a proper reference to the clay images made by such royal artists like N. Bhadra Singh, R.K. Yumjaosana and their followers in the nineteen's and beginning of the twenties. **Durga pratimas** prepared by the image makers and pictures drawn by the artist, construction of pandals, etc. depend on the prestige of the locality. Of late, electric illumination, coloured bells, loud speakers, use of T.V. cassettes, have increased in popularity. Various manifestations of goddess Sakti which engaged our attention are; In Kali puja (near Diwali), Kali form such as formidable appearance, 2 arms, 3 eyes, lolling tongue, matted hair, crescent moon on her forehead, coils of serpents, garland of skulls and an **aksamala** round her neck, tiger skin, weapons a pot shred or a cup of skull in her hand, her nudity and her standing on a corpus of Siva.

In Kalika there is a syncretism of belief of the tribal people, magic and philosophy. Devi as Kalika aspect is very prominent in the ideas and belief

of the Meiteis. This representation is mostly found in paintings and some manuscripts only.

Sakta Festivals and Rituals

Mother goddess or Durga is propitiated at such times of a year as Durga Puja, Kali puja, amvaci (earth's' menstrual period), worship of **Marai** (during the epidemic), etc. which are the equivalents of Bengal and Assam. Out of these, Durga puja until the sixties is celebrated with great pomp under the ruling dynasty of the state. With the experiments of cultural syncretisation, of early culture with Hindu culture, legends pertaining to early beliefs and tradition have become part of this festival. Manipuri code enjoins this celebration by every householder with the building of thatches. leaves, plantation of sugar cane, simple Vaisnava mode of worship of fruits and flowers. Charming **Devi dhumel** a kind of mridanga movement was introduced by king Marjit commemorating her worship.

Durga puja as a state Festival

The home coming of goddess Durga at the beginning of Mera/Autumn has been obtained as a state festival in Manipur since the time of Maharaja Garibniwaz (1709-1749). She is worshipped for 10 days commencing from **Chaorel Houba,** in the beginning of Devis' journey for the home. This day is also identified with the worship of Meitei tutelary deity, Sanamahi. It is held to be obligation for the married Meitei ladies not to go to the parental home during these 10 days. The last five days are attributed to the worship of 10 armed Durga in the royal court as well in the village and individual house. The first day is called **Lairemba Mayum Changba** (entering the fathers' home) after taking rest under a tone apple Heikhagok tree. The goddess is worshipped with the burning of incense, **pan**, fruit, flowers and singing of **Vaisnava kirtanas**. The auspicious timing for worship and astrological prediction concerning the country's prosperity and calamities are made by the royal astrologer under a royal mandate. The recital of **Chandi** in the night, discourse/story telling on the Hindu epics and singing of female pala or yatras too are done particularly in the palace and highly organised celebrations. Devi as Panthoibi is invoked on these days by the followers of revivalist group in several places of Imphal valley.

The third day is celebrated as **Hiyangthang Bora** (Virastomi) which is a matter of interest to the ladies. The powerful kamakhya (identified with Hiyangthang Lairembi) is invoked on a sky of a black stone and a log of plantain with phanek. Ladies wishing to have pure blood offered to the deity, phanek (Manipuri Sari). The puja was organised by the rulers of the temple premise and pilgrims were so huge in their life (till 1970). Worship inside the **kunda** is for the Hindus only.

The following day is called **Vali** where boys cut **Torbot**, and pumpkin in honour of Devi. The Soldier of 4th Assam Rifles sacrifice buffaloes, goats, pigeons, etc. in the cantonment area (Former Kangla Ngugoibi area). The Vaisnava Hindu of Manipur do not favour such sacrifices involving

blood of the animals and brides although cows were sacrificed in the days of yore for feeding the different hill tribes of Manipur

Kwak Tanba (final worship)– The last day is celebrated as **Kwak tanba** (driving the crow), at the same time as **Ravan Kappa** (shooting Ravana) which was the outcome of Ramanandi cult during the time of Maharaja Garibaniwaj. During the regime of the Maharajas the experts of royal court and court astrologers chose a place for celebration for a particular year. which is decorated with the building of **kwaksang** hut for the crow. In the morning the king formally appoints/reap-points a **Senapati**/general in a traditional manner for playing an important part of country's' war. The idol of Shri Ramji Prabhu (Manipuri name for shri Rama) installed by Maharaja Garibaniwaz is taken in procession to the mandopa of Shri Govindaji after which the Senapati and the nobles worshipped Him with songs and **arati** (light). The investiture of the king as also observed by pouring water from the hands of 4 virgins through a cloth. The incoming general/Senapati is duty bound to feed the nobles and **chak khangba** the public in his place. This custom is known as **Lan Chakkhangba** (feeding for war).

As for the evening programme– The spectacular procession consisting of the King and Yubraj in an elephant, Senapati in a horse, cavalry, artillery, infantry, **maibas**, **maibis** (priest and priestesses), Pena players and the public is a sight yet to be rivalled. On arrival of the selected place they take seats in order of precedence where they are honoured with the presentations of **Tangon** flower (a kind of native flower). Demonstration of sword, fighting, spear dance wrestling and dance are staged with skill in the open maiden. Manipuri martial art forms and throwing of **arambai** (poisoned arrow) are brought to life under the patronage of the rulers.

While they are enjoying these items some officials and scholars went to another place where mudkey and sweetmeats are thrown for the crows. A gun is fired into the air to make the crows to flight. Scholars in this line read the direction and manner of flight of the crows. The reading is immediately reported to the Maharaja who rewards them with clothes, money, salt and flowers.

The another selected place for the offering of Ravana with heads is made on a framework of local earthen pots. The jawans or Meitei army personnel of the state police shot through it. As per their belief there are interpretations of future events of the king and the kingdom from the spot hit by the arrow or bullet. The concerned officials reported the mission of the king who presented them with the customary things and gifts. Perhaps the feature about this part is the fact that the hill tribes and Muslims are entitled to participate in it.

Another aspect of this celebration is to drop gold and silver particles in the image of the king as reflected in **Mityengphu,** is a jar filled with water to the brim which is kept in the eastern side of the hut. The recitation of mantras and puja materials are conducted by the chief Pandit or his deputy

when the party starts on the return journey, the pandits sing war charms as mentioned in early Manipuri texts such as **Sana Lamok, Khoiju Lamok** and **Lanpha Lamok**. They are received at the gate by burning of **khoiju Laikham** (a kind of small plant growing in the hills of Manipur) whose smoking of leaves is supposed to ward off evil spirits. It is then followed by a particular type of reporting the results of the expedition to three royal deities, i.e. Pakhangba, Guru Nongsaba and goddess Yumjao Lairembi through the mouth of the high priest. They reported to them that the king has conquered the land of enemy, the head of enemy was cut and cremated according to proper rites. After the abolition of monarchy such types are no longer observed. This part is a reflection of war and conquest of enemies of the Meitei rulers and it is looked as such by the people who thereby get a glimpse of Meitei martial and military life in the past.

In the evening the images of ten armed Durga, flanked on both sides by images of karttika, Ganesha, Laksmi and Saraswati by lion and buffalo as the bottom are carried out to the royal moat for immersion with band party, musical parties and firing of cannons. Royal moats are used for boat race and immersion ceremonies of Devi (Saraswati). Immersion part is performed in the festivities called **Nauka Lila** consisting of singing of kirtan, performance of yatra and expensive fire works. Instances are not the record that the king used to maintain separate priests, kirtan groups army guard and plots of many acres of cultivable land for her worship.

Like the people of Bengal, the Manipuri Vaisnavas cultured the interpretation of the different types of conveyances for Devi in her coming to and going away from the earth. This day is considered auspicious for sowing seeds or gourd, pumpkin, cucumber starting education for the child, etc. The place becomes a land of plenty in the grains (paddy, vegetable etc.) and fishes such as **Ngaton, Ngakra** and **Sareng sheath** fish).

Community worship in every sub-division, lawn and village is made under the auspices of committees with the help of donations and subscriptions from every house. The Brahman priests of an area conducted and used to take important parts in the popularisation of all Hindu cults. All sections of people particularly the younger boys take great interest in such functions. The celebration is concluded with the distribution of **prasad** and feasting among them.

Kali Puja— The celebration of stern and formidable form of shakti is also worshipped by some Manipuris in certain areas on a voluntary basis. Night long performance of kritan, yatra music and fire cracker is arranged and they are attended by all vaisnavas. The worship is very common among the Bengali quarters in Babupara and Khwairamband Bazaar and Zirighat (western side of Manipur).

It is to be observed that the Manipuris do not have a better appreciation of most of these festivals except 5 day Durga puja and their places in their religious and cultural life. It is not surprising that they are as much a follower of Devi cult as they were of pre-Hindu beliefs and cults. Our army

jawans from different battalions worshipped Devi (Brick building or in the tent in any place of posting and used to shout 'Devi Durga' maki jai in the battle field. This is an aspect of Saktism in this part of India.

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16

CULTURE OF THE RAMAYANA IN MANIPUR AN-ANALYTICAL SURVEY

The Great **Ramandi** (Ramanandi) movement in Manipur in the beginning of the 18th Century has been largely instrumental for the Social, religious and Cultural reformation of the people. Some people call it a kind of cultural revolution, while some call it a kind of religious fanaticism in the history of Manipur. The Manipuries in the kingdom as also the Manipuries remaining in Burma, Cachar and parts of Bengal who are Manipuris by culture were acquainted with the religious, political and Social ideas of the Rama cult. The greatness and culture of the epic has been well suggested in the following proverbs—

1. Ramayangi Wari Taraga Sita Kanagi Matuno Hangli (After listening the entire story of the **Ramayana,** he has asked 'who is the wife of Sita")

2. Langkada Yaingang Tangba (The preciousness of turmeric in Lanka, the present Ceylon).

One is tempted to know at what time Ramandi cult came to Manipur surrounded by 9 consecutive range of mountains. The problem involves cultural diffusion, communication and Manipur's relations with the centres of Rama worship. A question has often been raised whether so famous a kingdom and so culturally important in Eastern India as Manipur could be known to the Aryans at the time of the **Ramayana.** In the **Kiskindha** canto (S. 19, 20, 26, 27, 28, 29, and 40) of **Valmiki Ramayana** Sugriva seems to state the monkeys in search for Sita in the hilly tracts of Udayagiri and on the way to Jambudwip. It refers vaguely to the areas in and around Manipur. Our chronicle shows that Vishnu came to be worshipped in the 15th Century by king Kiyamba who got and image of Visnu from Pong from Shan kingdom. We have an unbroken tradition and records from the time of King Garibaniwaz this time that the Manipuri kings with their patronage to this cult contributed a share in its success in Manipur. There is amble contemporaneous evidence to prove that the people were aware of Rama themes by the time of Khuyoi Tompok who allowed the staging of the ordeal of Sita in Chingarel Hill. About the year 1199 A.D. the worship of Hanumanji became widely current in Manipur. Sylhet blossomed as a famous centre of culture and architecture. Two architects namely (**Makumakmak**) Father-in-law and son-in-law from Sylhet were made to build two brick temples by king Thawanthaba one for 10 deities in the palace and another for Hanumanji. The temple for 108 deities collapsed after some time due to bad workmanship but the temple of Hanumanji is still extent in its present site. On the authority of MSS such as **Bamon**

Khunthoklon (migration of the Brahmans), Chingurembi **Khong Lup** (travellers of Chingurembi), Nongchup Haram (the people from the west) we learn that Rama worshipping sects, Vaisyas and Sudras from the west of India came to Manipur carrying with the ideals of Rama and religious books and were later absorbed in the local population. The process was in full swing during the time of king Khagemba (1597-1652) who popularised the introduction of Hindu customs and manners among the subjects. The Rama cult was a popular one among the defeated Manipuries who have taken asylum in Cachar after the war of 1606 A.D. They lived pious lives and spent their time in enjoying **Rama Katha** and visiting Sita Kunda, the famous shrine of West Bengal.

Finally, early in the 18th Century, there came Shantidas Gosai along with his two disciples Bagawandas and Naran das to Manipur via Jirighat to make it his centre of activity and to flood it with his doctrines of Ramanandi with the active help of King Garivniwaz. The King was invested with the Sacred thread by him at Lilong after a ceremonial bath in Imphal River. The mass conversion took place on Sunday, Inga/June-July 5, 1738.

At the instance of the Gosai king Garibaniwaz collected 160 MSS of the **Meithei *Puyas*** and burnt them up and replaced the use of vernacular script, song by Bengali language and script. He set up the image of Sri Rama along with the images of Laksman, Bharat, Satrughana and Sita.

The chronicle informs us that he carved out the image of Hanuman out of a big slab of stone and installed the same in Mahabali temple. **Vijaya Dasami** festival was integrated with Kwaktanba (driving the crow) and observed as a national festival with pomp. The devotees pointed Ramandi sect marks on the forehead and kept on saying holy names and Taraka mantra-Sri Ram Jaya Ram Jaya Jaya Rama. Under its influence the Manipuries discard the food of meat, drinks and poultry and burying the dead body to which they were attached ever since the early periods Ramandi faith turns the king into a pronounced believer. The **Jiwanyas** ceremony of ancient Meitei Goda-Sanamahi and Leimarel (which he had broken) was performed by reciting **Ramandi Taroka mantra.** The meithei Gods were made to perform avatars and Lilas. He initiated a distinctive style of Kirtan singing and dressing. The practice of taking Ramayanic names for the people and place became widely current. Ram, Laksman, Bharat, Sita, Bivisana, Dhabali, Nal, Nila, Jumbhuban, Indrajit, Sita, etc. were thought to be auspicious names. Enemies of God such as Ravana, Taraka, Marichi Mahiravana were discarded. Some of the Places were named as Ram Nagar, Ramsala, etc.

The system of writing Rama's name and mantras on coins, inscriptions and royal flags has been a salient feature of the 18th century Manipur. The names of Rama in full or in their abbreviated initial letter with or without salutation like "Sri" and `jaya' was struck on the coins. Images of Rama,

Sita, Hanuman, etc. in stone, bronze and wood have been carved for purposes of worship by the successors of king Pamheiba.

The strong association of Ramandi cult with the heroic and warlike talent of the Meities was in evidence. Tradition says that the Meitei warriors over-awed the Burmese by singing the glories of Shri Rama. The singing of Rama's attribute with drums wondered the Burmese soldiers for a while and thereby secured the victory over them in 1738 during the invasion of Burma by king Pamheiba alias Garibniwaz. As per the belief of the people the holi singers of the Dolyatra festival used to announce that Sri. Govindaji is their king, Vrandavanchandra their yubraj and Ramji Prabhu their general.

But what makes the Ramandi period (reign of Pamheiba, prince 1709-40) important in Manipur is the appearance of Rama bhaktas such as king Pamheiba, prince Syamsai, Santidas Adhikari, Angan Gopi (court scholar) a host of warrior and Kirtan singers. Through their efforts the Meiteis remain to this day Hindu Ramaites in some form. Manipur owes much to the Ramandi cult from the cultural point of view. I have sought to work out the following points in this essay.

Prince Shyamshai

No great devotee of Sri Rama or Hanuman is known before Prince Shyamsai, the eldest son of King Garibniwas. The famous instance is that of Rani Gomati, mother of Ajit Sai who had some control over king Garibniwaz. Like Keikay reminded the king of a boon which the latter had promised to grant her long since and demanded its fulfilment in the installation of his son Ajit Sai as heir apparent in place of Shyamsai. Shyam Sai fulfilled her fathers' promise and followed his father in his exile in different places of Manipur and of Burma.

Shyamsai seems to have devoted to the worship of Rama and Hanuman with his characteristic towards the practice of Sadhana as would be worthy of an ideal prince he represents the very touchstone of tantric and Ramayanic culture.

He learnt from Khongnangthaba, the great Pandit of the king that he would get everything if he worships his Itcha Devta with Samkalpa on 7th day of Lai Khundin Lalup (assembly of god to perform their duties) at Mongba Haraoba grove which forms the eastern bank of the Imphal river. With the knowledge and consent of his power he organised an assembly of uplifted souls and held a seven day festival of Rama Katha. The story goes that an unknown Bhakta was present in the gathering and enjoyed the Katha with tears. He is of white complexion and wear white dhoti and wrapper. He does not put on a shirt or turban. While enjoying the Kathai conducted by Angom Gopi (the state dean faculty in the ancient lore of the court) with rapt attention. The prince is of the opinion that Hanuman, a devotee of Sri Rama must be invariably present in the hearing of Rama lore. On the 7th day he saw the siddhi in the Bhakta and prevented him from having the pandal without revealing his identity. 'May I know your name, asked the

prince. "My name is Bhakta, Das of the Lord, I am a pardeshi", replied the old man. Being pressed hard he agreed to reveal his identity after a promise. By way of conversation they proceeded up to the present shrine of Hanuman, the old man discarded his form and gave darson to Shyamsai. He thereafter granted laghima Siddhi to Shyamsai and further advised to worship Kalika so that he can get other siddhis. Prince Shyamsai worshipped kalika at the temple of Ningthem Pukhri Mapal where the goddess appeared before him and persuaded him to take the siddhis from Hanuman himself after a trial. He did as he was told by Kali. Shyamsai by his mantra got a five faced murti of Hanuman who blessed him with 9 siddhis. As stipulated by Hanuman, he performed puja on every ekadasi of Thawan/July-August in the temple. It is customary among the Manipuri Vaisnavas to visit the shrine of Hanumanji in every Tuesday for strength and curing the children's decease. The grove is full of monkeys as devotees of Hanuman.

Shyamsai knew the secrets of war living in water, siddhis, etc. He was invincible by the enemy. It is even narrated that the king of Ava (Burma) cannot perform many supernatural deeds which the prince does so in a contest. A passage in **Ningthourol Lambuba** says that Prince Shyamsai helped his father in Burmese wars. The king took with him a flag of white cloth with the figure of Hanuman drawn on it. He adopted a stratagem which involves some risks. The Burmese shot their guns to the Manipuris from a distance. Shyamsai sat beneath a decorated white umbrella which is a symbol of royalty. Thinking him to be the king, they aimed their guns at him. On the other hand king Garabiniwaz could supervise the operation.

Rama's Archana incarnation after 7 years' devastation (1819-1825 A.D.)— After defeating the Burmese in 1825, King Garibniew Gambhir Singh assumed power and the country returned to normalcy. The people of Manipur lost their beloved idols in the bustle of the journey during the wars. Under instructions from the king the people wandered over hills and valleys for one month in search of the images of Rama, Krishna set up by king Garibniwaz. At last he performed the nirupaz of Rama and Sita afresh in an auspicious day in order to resume the devotional rites and festivals. The images of Hanuman, Garibniwaz and Santidas (personalities associated with the spread of Ramandi in Manipur) were also prepared by Ch Lolang Singh by the order of the King. The abishek (conjuration) ceremony was scheduled to be held on 5th Bhairel Shri Panchami/January-February after a grand adhivas ceremony in the previous night.

Here is an account of how the images of Rama, Laksman and Sita came to the King at this moment.

In the war the priests of Ramji temple fled to an unknown country with the idols. He wandered on to different places and falling down to the hilly areas without caring what sport of place it was. The priest and his party came to the Naga village of Lai Manai Anji (near Terakeithel-20 miles to the west of Imphal). The priest began to prey without sleeping. Towards the

end of the night he dreamt a dream in which the Lord appeared before him and said that the devastation will be as long as 7 years in Manipur on account of the conjunction of 9 planets. The Lord asks the priest and his party to put the idols in a box made of copper and to bury under a mound. After weeping the priest and his party did as the Lord's behest and left the place. Seven years have passed, the place was changed into a grove in course of time the pot containing the images lie hidden under a mound of grass and plants. After 1825, a Tangkhul Naga made this place as his fields for terrace cultivation of maize and cucumber. The Lord himself began his lila of cherishing the company of the Nagas. In the night the two idols of Rama and Krisna sported themselves in the field destroying the plants and flowers. The owner called the villagers together with their spades and hatchet they watched the playing for catching the Lord for some nights. They found to their amazement the pot containing the images. Thinking that they are the sacred idols of the Meithei King, they laid them on a seat in a litter and brought the same with some customary articles of offering such as banana, Mangra, etc. On receiving the idols in the nick of time, that is 4th Phairel King Gambhir Singh and Nar Singh Senapati were overcome with joy. All the people including the Nagas began to chant the glory of Rama's sweet name. The Nagas who feasted their eyes on the enchanting form and being associated with the idols in some ways were ordered to join the abhisek ceremony of Rama, Laksman, as a mark of reverence. The royal abhishek ceremony took place on Friday. Sri Panchami with music, dance. It is customary among the Manipuries that they should visit the Ramji temple on every Friday and enjoy the story telling and other discourses of Rama on this day. It is held to be the day where Hanuman Thakur came to the temple of Ramji for seva.

The daily worship of Ramji and Hanuman Thakur were conducted by the Brahmans who got revenue free lands from the Kings. The idols of Ramji and Hanumanji are realities in Manipuri mind. They showed sign of bleeding, telling when any calamity visited the country pralaya and war to descend on the kingdom but remained normal when the country was peaceful.

The Meithei means of worship and Ramaite Deities: Ramandi cult as noted above is a product of the faith of the India missionaries, the Manipuris and the tribals. Its worship and art represent a synthesis. The offerings include the products of Manipur according to its style, the highest being Chingheiba and Bhouheiba (to foretell the luck seeing rice or paddy poured in a dish or basket) before Ramji Prabhu and Hanuman Thakur. The Manipuri Vaisnavas offer a huge round piece of bababa leaf with smaller leaves on it to form plates for six areas nuts and six betel leaves for Ramji and 3 each for Hanuman. They use honey, flowers, fruits, sugar cane, curd, milk, Hojang (an edible fruit having a great plteney), a bunch of banana having odd numbers, pieces of gold and silver, etc. They used to offer the flowers to Hanuman after being offered to Ramji. Hanuman is thought to be

happy to receive the flower that was previously offered to his master. Animal sacrifice is not countenanced by them.

It was supposed to have religious merit if some offer dhoti, turban, shirt (to change the dress of deities), flags and bells to Ramji and Hanuman.

The royal festivals connected with this cult are Ram Navami or Ram Mela, Hanuman Jayanti, Ravan Kappa (the shooting of Ravana) and Vijaya Dasami, hallowed modes of worship, offering in the auspicious Days, and Janmastami, Radhastami days for which the temple of Ramji and Hanumanji were well known. The details of these festivals will be discussed in another paper.

The channels of communication used for dissemination of Rama lores and ideals can be classified into 7 categories (i) Literature (ii) Kathak, (iii) ballads (iv) old sankritan (v) ballet, yatra and dramas, (vi) War and weapons, (vii) Paintings and inscriptions

Characteristic features (including remarks)

1. Rama's association with Nrisingh impressed the Manipuri Vaisnavas as well. Nar Singh Tilla Khara of Sylhet has been described on the cult of Ramandi and Nrisingh in Manipuri account. The powerful Ramandi preacher Santidas Gosai has been associated with this centre Under this influence King Garibniwaz is reported to install images of both Rama and Nrisingh. During the 7 years' deastation images of Rama, Lakshman, Sita were kept in the temple of Nar Singh Tilla from where they were again brought back to Manipur after the war but texts like **Bamon Khunthoklan** and **Vijay Panesali** seem to emphasize the point that Ramandi monks from Sylhet and Cachar are keeping the idols of Nar Singh. Nar Singh Tilla Akshara was financed by the kings like Nar Singh, Chandrakirti, Churachand, etc.

2. The Manipuri concept varies from the concepts of Rama found among the Ramaite sects and of Mahatma Gandhiji. The Meitheis modify this picture to suit their thought and traditions. He is depicted to wear dhoti. He was the highest deity during the time of Garibniwaz. Latter in the grades of deities Govindaji is somewhat higher than Ramji Prabhu. As seen by them, Ramji is a deity in whose worship arecanuts are necessary (3 for Hanumanji). When we compare him with other concepts we find that he was treated as an Umanglai in Thenunggei village and was worshipped according to Laiharaoba rite because the purpose of the story was to relate his heroic lilas to their belief.

3. As in Hindi and Tamil Ramayana, in Manipuri concept Rama is treated as an incarnation of Vishnu. It was his noble character and popularity that induced the writer of the Manipuri version of the **Gita** to include him in the list of 10 avataras (in the line of Jayadeva's **Gita-Govinda**).

4. The Meiteis were familiar with the **Ramayana** and drew the ideals, instance and style in their writing and action. The sacrifice performed by King Khing Khing Ngangba, the eating of banana by queen Penu Leima

which had the effect of having one male child, the birth of the child in the forest, meeting of the queen by the King, etc. which are the concepts of Ramayana from indigenous sources are found in the early myths of the Meiteis. The writers drew inspiration from the Ramayanas and wrote them in this garb. The ideal of princess Thoibi, Sati Khongnang, etc. is patterned on Sita's ideals. In the story of producing a child by the yogic power of Luwang Guru they positively referred to the power of Rishi Valmiki in bringing forth Kusha.[8]

5. The royal tank, **Ningthem Pukhri** or **Ramji Pukhri** (dug up by Maharaj Garibniwaj), **Rama Shala, Rama Nagar** (Thanga island about 32 miles to the south west of Imphal), Ramji Haokhul (Kabui Naga village where the images of Rama, Sita, etc. were kept during the great war of devastation) and Mahabali temple (temple of Hanumanji) are well known in the valley of Manipur. Sita in the Marring Naga hill village also bore Sita's name.

6. The Manipuris have a strong belief in the tantric and folk elements of the **Ramayana** viz., the flight of Hanuman to Lanka, flight with an uprooted part of Gandharva hill at the time of Lakshman's unconsciousness, Ahilya's liberation by the touch of Rama's feet, supernatural origin of Rama, Lakshman, Sita, Hanuman, etc. The Meitei system of medicine is considerably influenced by the importance of Ramayanic medicinal herbs and use of stones.

7. Rama saga as in the islands of South East Asia and stress on Ravana's good character, its had appealed to them also .

Notes and references

1. Information by late Kh. Dhanachandra Singh, ex SP., and a noted dramatist of Manipur.
2. Kh. Kaomacha Singh, **Manipur Itivrtta,** 1983, (2nd edition), pp. 16-19
3. Information by Pandit N. Khelchandra Singh, Padmashri.
4. Vide passages of Ningthourol Lambuba MS; Dr. M. Kirti Singh, Religious Developments in Manipur in the 18th and 19th Centuries, 1981, pp. 298-9.
5. Passages of royal chronicle depict the incident very clearly.
6. Vide my paper "Ramanandi cult in Manipur" published in Sahitya, a journal of Manipur Sahitya Parishad, 1977.
7. Loc. cit.
8. My observation.

17

ANCIENT AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES IN HILL AREAS OF MANIPUR

For centuries in the hill areas of Manipur, slash and burn type of agricultural practice known as jhum or shifting cultivation has been in use. Known as 'Pamlou' In Manipuri, it is a primitive agricultural practice which can be traced back to some 12,000 years ago when Neolithic man shifted from food gathering to food collecting habit. According to 1991 census, the number of persons engaged in shifting cultivation in Manipur was 5.9 lakhs which comprised 32.61% of the total population. The jhum areas in Manipur are expanding at the rate of more than 900 kilometres square per year and at present about one lakh hectares are estimated to be under jhuming involving 70,000 tribal families.

'Pamlou' in Manipur is a system of land use that has close linkage with the factors like undulating topography, inhospitable climate in the hilly region, lack of infrastructure, community system of land tenure and other socio-economic and cultural factor of the land. It is a life style specially adapted to the harsh hill environment. The essential features of 'Pamlou' in Manipur are as below :

1. Rotation of fields rather than crops
2. Use of fire for clearing the vegetation
3. Use of human labour as the chief input
4. Keeping the land fallow for a number of years for regeneration of vegetation
5. Non-employment of drought animals, plough or machinery
6. Use of simple implements (the dibble stick, chopping knives, small hoe)
7. Community ownership, joint labour and mixed cropping system)

The sequence of operations in shifting cultivation are marked by the following :

1. Selection of site on hill slopes
2. Clearing the forest tract by jungle cutting
3. Burning of the dried vegetation
4. Demarcation of plots and construction of field house
5. Dibbling and sowing of seed's reference to the type of crops
6. Weeding
7. Protection of crops against attack by wild animals, pests etc.
8. Harvesting, thrashing and storing
9. Cultivation for 1-2 years and shifting to another site
10. Return to the same site after 3-6 years to repeat the same process and operations.

The jhumias have the practical knowledge of the local factors-physical, climatological, topographical, etc. and they schedule the operations within Jhum in such a way as to choose the befitting time for a particular operation. The site which comprises a part of the forest is selected during winter (December) near the hillside. It is then cleared by felling of trees with' dais' (Thangekou) and axes by the community. The cut vegetation is left to drying till the month of March when the dried material (leaves, bushes etc. are set on fire and turned to ashes. Then the ashes are mixed with the soil which is loosened by use of hoe. The ground thus prepared is ready for the sowing of seeds. The forest lands belong to the community and a person is recognised as the owner of the land till he cultivates the lands allotted to him by the community.

Thus, under shifting cultivation, the chief energy input is solar power which is free and labour which is generated within the village itself. All the basic requirements are met by the farmers from the land through the harvest of the forest which is a free input. The cropping pattern is mixed with the different types of species of diverse growth farms, the optimum use of available resources and space being ensured. The jhumias get gainful employment throughout the year for all the members of the community as both the winter and summer seasons are suitable for mixed cropping. By and large, shifting cultivation is practised in the hilly region with gentle slopes, some of the slopes are quite steep for the use of plough and the only practice to be relied in the remotest areas without any infrastructure under the present set-up of the socio-economic conditions. Generally, jhumias get fulfilled their basic requirements of rice, vegetables for food and clothing, firewood for fuel and maize, chilly, ginger, turmeric, pineapple, pumpkin, watermelon, etc. as cash crops for meeting their day to day requirements. The tribal villages in most of cases are situated in the interior of hilly terrain's and surrounded by dense, thick vegetation of disease pruned nature to human beings and their live-stock. The clearance of vegetation for jhum ensures the control over harmful pests, viral vectors and ferocious wild animals. Due to cold humid climate jhuming remains a comfortable work for the Jhumias as they do not want to work in a wet terraced land.

The principles of equality and co-operation among the members of the tribal community responsible for the unity and integrity of the village. Thus the practice of jhum cultivation is linked with the socio-cultural and economic aspects of the region Besides shifting cultivation, the other important occupations of jhumias include hunting and collection of food from their surroundings. In case, the forest resources needed for the occupations are exhausted, then the shifting of villages to the other resourceful places is inevitable for these nomadic tribes.

Shifting cultivation which was once a practice of land use within the capability of the land is now considered as not desirable. With the increase of population and due to the intense grazing pressure, the fallow period between the two jhum cycles have been reduced. It has resulted in the

practice as wasteful leading to the devastating practice of erosion, diminishing flora and fauna and reduced soil fertility besides high labour. The hill slopes and mountain ranges of Arakan Yones demarcating the border between India and Myanmar (Burma) on the Eastern side the Thangjing range, Koubru range on the western border of the valley in Manipur are gradually becoming denuded of their lush ever green tropical wet forest wealth and getting converted to poor shrubs with few denuded scattered trees. Down the slopes the salutation of wetlands and lakes is continued. Loktak, the largest fresh water lake in NE India is reduced by about 30% of its water holding capacity during the past decade. Removal of forests and resultant soil erosion have drastically reduced the water balance of the subsoil and underground water with the result that about 11 shallow lakes and swamps in Manipur valley have dried up, the chief among them being Lamphelpat, Kakwapat and Porompat and are now being used up for human settlements and cultivation. Waithhou, Loushipat and Poiroupat are among the 23 shallow lakes which are at the verge of drying up. A continuous 3 days rain in the hills, results in the devastating floods in the valley. The perennial streams of one time are being altered, the loss of flora and fauna continues, the productivity of the land is slowed down due to the deterioration of the soil, its erosion being rampant. The tribal villages that were once located at the highest points of the hills and mountains have been compelled to migrate downwards due to the degradation of the soil where perennial water points are available, the tribal ladies travel 5-10 kms. to get water for domestic use. Thus, 'Pamlou' affects the economy of the Manipur state as awhole as the scope of planned utilization of forest resources for industrialization and general economic development becomes remote.

The tribals of Manipur are aware of these problems and have adopted the techniques for preventing soil erosion and enhancing production in shifting cultivation on the hill slopes in some of the districts of Manipur.

For water conservation, across the field in parallel lines at short distance, the consumed trunks of the trees are laid down, that serve as dams to water which comes down at the time of rains and further enables the growth of the vegetative cover. The dams also break the velocity of the running water and increase the time of concentration thus increasing the scope of percolation of water in the soil. To prevent the accumulation of the large amount of water at the base resulting in multitude of problems, the length of the slope is reduced, it also helps the rate of infiltration. The underground organs of different species are not disturbed and short stumps of the trees are left intact helping in quicker regeneration of the vegetation which is left fallow which also indirectly affects the infiltration capacity of the soil.

To check soil erosion from the top level land, contour strip cropping is practised. In some areas, logs are put along the line thus constructing rudimentary contour bounds, not only to arrest the soil but also to intercept the water flowing down the slope. Crop rotation is practised as a soil

conservation measure to reduce the losses of soil through erosion and of plant nutrients through leaching, increase and maintain organic matter and nitrogen supply of the soil and maintain good soil structure which absorbs and retains water. On steep slopes and marginal lands, jhumias provide protective covers like forests or fruit trees, suitable cash crops, grasses, leguminous crops etc.

For soil amelioration, a number of measures are taken by jhumias out of their own wisdom and experience. Jhum as such is itself the system of diversified farming where crop species of different growth patterns are favoured which protects the loss of soil nutrients through erosion and leaching. Life span of the jhum field reduced according to the jhum cycle. The span varies from 1-2 years only as the jhum cycle has come down to 3-5 years except when a garden of banana, pine-apple or orange is maintained after the first year or mixed cropping. The short jhum cycle emphasizes the growing of perennials and tuberous crops. In Manipur, Semi-perennial and perennial crop species like banana, castor, ginger, tapioca and colocasia are sown intermittently and at random throughout the growing season. Season of firing is carefully chosen by the jhumias, otherwise the uncut forest situated at the comparatively lower altitude which is also dry by this time suffers from the forest fire set for the purpose of jhumming and the whole hill becomes a sheet of fire arresting the natural regeneration of plant species. The tribals protect the valuable plant species by drawing a fire line around the felled area and preserve the soil micro-organisms, flora and fauna. While clearfelling the vegetation set for the purpose of shifting cultivation, boles of larger trees are not felled, only lower branches are cut, thus protecting the soil against wind and water erosion and loss of nutrients. Along with other vegetation they are not reduced to ashes. While preparation of seed bed by chiselling without turning the soil, the productive layer of ash on the surface of the ground is worked into the few inches and dibbler is used to sow the seeds without disturbing it.

Some of the forests are managed by the tribal villages, they informally regulate the use of the forest resources by selling the surplus and carry on community activities and welfare shames.

Though jhumias practice the above mentioned conservation measures, still the scientific investigations are to be carried out to increase the productivity of the jhum fields, along with the improvement of crop varieties to be used for the purpose of shifting cultivation having better soil conservation value. In short, land use and practice should be based on land capability and suitability.

As per the recommendation of the task force Jhum control constituted by the Government of India, various integrated programmes for rehabilitation of Jhumia families have been taken up. Government measures to provide jhumia family the cost for taking permanent cultivation are proving inadequate and the process is bound to be long. The farmers in the hills have to resort to jhuming for sustenance of their families as in the

present physiographic conditions they do not like to work in the wet terraces. Government Departments particularly Horticulture and Soil Conservation Deptt., forest Deptt. and Manipur Tribal Corporation Ltd. have taken various measures to control the practice of shifting cultivation. Because of the difficulties of wet cultivation like excessive moisture in the rainy season, high relative humidity of the air that cause storage problems for the grain particularly because of fungus, pests and many other diseases acidic nature of soil, low phosphorous content in the soil, high concentration of iron leading to iron toxicity and other productivity constraints, the tribals continue practising 'Pamlou' in the hills of Manipur. The tribals are moreover tradition bound and even for a permanent gain in the long run, they are sentimental to bring about any change in their traditional way of life, their culture and traditions revolve round shifting cultivation.

It is not possible to stop jhuming completely under the present climatic, topographic and physiological circumstances. Also it appears that every occupation alternative suggested in the region may face many hardships and economic problems due to the lack of infrastructure (transport, communication, market conditions), prevalent harsh climate and community system of land tenure. It is of high priority for scientists to produce improved variety of crops for shifting cultivation, to practise suitable land use for soil and water conservation giving great impetus to the development of agro forestry in the region which may be a solution to the management of hill areas and meet the necessities of the tribals of Manipur still following ancient agricultural practices. It is of priority to make jhumming more productive as a short time measure. Before leaving the jhumland as fallow, sowing the seeds of leguminous plants by jhumias may enrich the soil with organic matter and nitrogen, besides preventing the soil erosion.

As an alternative to jhumming the following programmes are to be adapted-

1. Afforestation programme is to be given due importance not only for providing dependable wage employment but also to check soil erosion and further deterioration of the land, for preservation of the valuable flora and fauna of the state. Degraded forest land is to be afforested under social forestry programme with suitable species having fuel and fodder value.

2. Many tracts of forest land laying unused a cultivable waste must be reclaimed for rehabilitation of the jhumia families, with suitable use of land resources to supplement food production.

3. In the near future, terraced cultivation must replace shifting cultivation, to meet the food requirements of the people in the hilly region.

4. The steeper hill areas like those in the Ukhrul district are suitable for Horticulture development with plants like plums, pear, apples etc. On mild slopes mixed farming may be continued along with tuberous crops.

5. In the entire South district of Manipur, there is a great scope for raising different crops like rice, maize, wheat, oil seeds pulses like arhar, black gram, green gram, peas, besides ginger, turmeric, potato, citrus and other fruits as pineapple, plum, pear etc.

6. Non-farming occupations like cottage and small scale industries, bee keeping, poultry and live stock raising must be encouraged among the tribal farmers of the region.

In NE India as a whole, this ancient agricultural practice has helped to preserve the local races, crop plants, and domesticated animal's varieties and conserved valuable germplasm for resistance to pests and diseases. With increasing population pressure, improvement in 'Pamlou' maintaining ecological balance is a challenge for the agricultural scientists of the region.

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18

SECTION-ANTHROPOLOGY AND ARCHAEOLOGY OUR VANISHING ARTS AND INDUSTRIES-A STUDY OF MANIPUR

Arts and crafts of Manipur are on the verge of extinction nowadays on account of the negligence of the people and lack of state patronage. Mention can be made of such crafts as Nung-Tenggot (cup of stone), stone crafts of Lamang dong, manufacture of saltiness in different parts, Pottery making, Dyeing with Kumfrom Kumna and Iron melting in Kakching area of Manipur. The paper is an attempt to describe the process of the above crafts and suggestion for saving them from complete extinction. These crafts involve sadhana, artistic creations, innovations and skills of the ancient people.

Stone Craft in Lamang dong/Vishnupur

The first brick temple is attributed to the origin of Vaishnava Religion during the time of King Kyamba in the 15 century. The famous single celled, conical roofed Vishnu temple in Lamangdong is now under the protection of the Archaeological Survey of India.

Origin-Its origin is traced to a presiding deity. . . . . of this area in the belief of the people.

The people of Lamang dong/Vishnupur are the specialists in the art of preparing stone bowls and other allied products of stone. They lived on the bank of the river Thongjarok. Expert craftsmen used to practise this trade of making and selling them in Lamangdong area (the place is equally famous for Vishnu temple and Soidon (fermented bamboo shoot) in a satisfactory way even before the invasion of Manipur by the Japanese in the summer of 1944.

The craftsmen of Lamangdong are noted for their skills in the manufacture of Dharti (stone slabs with or without ornamental carvings on the surfaces and slanting edges used as a base for wooden pillars), Kankra (smoking pipe for tobacco and hemp), candle stand, ashtrays, sandalwood crusher, spice powder, rice and fruit crushers, pestle, legged bowns; thalis, pots with lid, water jugs, chandol Nung, a kind of round place used for rubbing sweet scented sandal wood, shumbal (pounding rice), chakri (for grinding paddy) and other kind of jugs for grains. Each article is unique in view of its distinctive forms and designs. No two bowls are exactly alike.

There are, at present, only 5 working stone crafts with their students. For lack of facilities some skilled craftsmen have left this trade.

Process of Making stone craft

Raw material of this craft is found in the Leimarok/Loumilok quarry of Thangjing hill which is bound 4 kilometres from the modern Bishenpur town. They have to traverse a steep hill having rugged terrain's and a river and moved further along another river where big sandstone boulders eroded from the slopes are available. Such kind of stone is found nowhere except here. The sandstone of this place is collected on the bank of the river as well as the river beds or sandwiched between starts of sand and mud. The craftsmen select the stone by tapping it with a hammer. From the sound he could determine its hardness. After due splitting, rough sizing with a chisel and a hammer the raw materials are transported to the workshed on the back by a canet basket. This process is time saving and labour saving device in as much as the weight of the stone is decreased in transporting from far off hills to the workshop. Then the finished crafts are fixed to a manually drive lathe for smoothening to get the desired shape of the craft.

The wheel has the appearance of a wooden solid conical shape with a broad head and smaller tail of about 2 feet length. At the centre of the boarder head is attached to the end of a small rod piece at 90'' through a wooden pit. . . . . just at a place in between the smaller end and broader head is placed on a winding supporter leaving the tapering head free. The stones of desired shape is adhered to the surface of the tapering end with the help of a gum prepared from the heated resin and oil. When the heat is duly reduced, lathing is started by turning the stone against cutting edges. The wheel is drawn by a hard rope pulling to and fro on the broad ends by two hands. After the finishing of lathing, the adhesive gum is again heated so as to take out the produce easily.

Nowadays power diver lathes have been installed and thereby bringing about the good production with less physical input(1985-86). A labour can earn Rs. 150 to 250 per day. Thei: position is somewhat improved if we notice the absence of regular wage earning system and depending on the witty traders and middlemen.

Demand for the products are increasing although there was no sign of state patronage and public sympathy. Much scope for modern technique, adequate capital, transport and marketing facilities can be called for. As otherwise the art of attractive stoneware will become a museum collection.

At present there are only 3 families who are experts in this art. Shri Pebam Kulachandra (67 years) is a recognised stoneware worker. According to the information supplied by Khumanthem Khuman Leima, a non a genarian, the old surviving woman trader of Bishenpur/ Vishnupur District, renowned names of this craft were Hemam Chaoba, Thiyam Gulabard, Kharaibam Amondar Chaobi, etc. during the fifties of 19th century.

Salt Manufacturing Process

Salt springs are ascertained by the presence of salty and white coating in the muddy water of Lok (. . .brook . . . . .)/Ishong khong (. . water-mine, Channel. . . .) Cattle are found to lick the saline water or earth of that area and can live healthy lives without taking grass. There are particular deities known as Thumkhong Lairembi (goddess of salt) mines supposed to be the concubine of Lord Pakhangba, the presiding deity of Ruling dynasty) who are to be propitiated with the blood of human sacrifice in a weil.

The hovering of subtle vapur in the morning in the spring area is also an indication of the same. A shaft is sunk down to the spring. A cylinder formed of the hollowed trunks of large trees, lit perpendicularly into the spring, are preserved in the erect position, by ramming earth between them and the sides of the well; the diameter of the cylinders in seldom more than 6 feet and the depth varies from 40 to 60 feet.

There are about 80 salt mines/wells in Manipur valley and hills which are once controlled by the King who levied a tax of 1/5th upon the quantity of the water drawn from the well. The forced labourers and convicts were engaged in the digging of wells and evaporation of salt. By artificial evaporation in the salt spring villages used to prepare circular pieces of Meiteithum/salt. The salined half boiled water can also be used for cooking and eating.

Boiling the brine for recovery of salt is a difficult process which takes time. The separation of the water spring from the brine spring is possible by expert hands through expert knowledge since they come up side by side. It has been acclaimed to be an expression at its best mythological and traditionally. Historically it has come upon to us since 1195 about the reign of King Thawanthaba. It cannot be denied that a small plant called Thumnambi Herb, the leave of which has the taste of the salt has proved itself capable of serving the function of salt.

Mr. Higgins, one of the experienced presidents of the Darbar and the Political Agent has aptly remarked as follows—

"If any repairs are done, they are better done by time honoured than by modern methods which failed in Sikhong."

Iron Melting Industries of Manipur

The people of Kakching (in Thoubal district) have evolved strategies which the workers under a teacher can use to exploit locally available materials for manufacturing iron works for the whole of this kingdom. The presiding deity of iron is known as Khamlanbga in the sacred lore of Manipur. In one of his earlier incarnations he was born as Lamnung Mori Yotshuba Khunung Tek Tek Thangjaba. He was one of the good polo players. His Khunthoklon is associated with his marriage with Humu Leima, birth of Amudon, leaving for Takhel/modern Tripura in search of iron ore deposits, taking Sija Kalika as his second wife and returning to Manipur with Sija Kalika and her followers. He made temporary stay at

Uripok, Haobam Marak, Thoubal and finally at Kakching (both connected with extraction of iron ore), teaching the people to mend and reshape a iron dao and sharpen the edges to the people of Imphal.

In the prayers as well as to the local belief Lord Khamlangba is described as a powerful deity who could dissolve stone like salt, chew iron like the eating of chagem (a favourite curry prepared from boiling of rice, vegetables and other leaves). His descendants and groups who lived in Imphal became known as Thangjam whose main duty was to prepare iron dao, spear, knife, iron tripod. Though some families have taken to agriculture some are still following iron smelting and blacksmith works for their livelihood. Between 100 and 150 years prior to this period, the villages of Kakching Khullen and Wairi had about 20 furnace centres. The most profile period of iron creativity was before the reign of King Pamheiba, Chandrakriti when there was not much contact with the West. Curiously enough the Marings (Noga tribe) are tribals with traditions of iron works and weaving. Every Maring household are to practise blacksmithy works for them.

Process of iron works

The people of Kakching and its adjoining areas had knowledge and experience of process which contains hidden secrets requiring years of experience. They pursued vigorously iron melting and blacksmithy works during the time of their settlement in Kerjeng and Laimani hill before their final coming to Kakching. The southern parts of Manipur on the way to Sugnu such as Kakching khunou, korasantabi, Serou, Wangu, Naokakhong, etc. were iron producing areas associated with the settlement of the people of Khamlanbga. The martial tradition of Manipur would not have been possible without iron mines, development of iron melting and manufacture of weapons.

The ore is found as stone-iron in the underground spot. The presence of iron ore in a place is detected with the string striking of a long skewer made of Saneibi bamboo of about 12.5 feet when the ground is soft with rain water. On seeing signs of iron deposit many people visit the place and attempted to excavate the same. Khamlangba, the presiding deity of iron is thought to possess the power of causing the iron ore to move about. It may be found near the surface at one time, the next it may disappear only to appear again according to his will. The party dig a pit in a nearby area for storing water. The stone iron is mixed with water in the pit till Leinang is obtained. The muddy water is then filtered in a clearly washed long (lengthy basket). The iron producing stone is then brought to the furnace centre. The pit utilised for the purpose of cleaning the stone is known as Nungjam Kom. The stone is fired by weeds and thatches till it is red like the brick. Then it is grinded in the sumble (mortar) by suk (pestle). The maphol () is selected after due filtration and screening. The maphol is measured by a standard measurement and made baskets of different yotkang (basket containing iron deposits).

A clay mound (Leibung) along with a wall (about 10 feet in circular shape and 3 feet in height) near the foot of mound) is constructed. There was a well-defined process of skin bellows for blowing and 2 doors of the furnace-one for taking out melted iron and another door for fitting 2 hollow tubes and space for keeping charcoal and pieces of iron in the furnace. one Yotkang (a standard basket of iron ore) may require the consumption of charcoal and pieces of iron 3 or 4 times. When there was red hot charcoal, the pieces of iron was put there by pan. The iron became melted and made itself a lump. Then it is taken out by the help of a pan. After putting it in a Nungphal (a stool made of hard stone) the quantity and number of iron is cut by an axe when the iron is extremely hot. Working hours from morning till sunset by a party of 4 or 5 Yogalis (workers) and consumption of 4 or 5 baskets are reported by people who had seen it.

The workers had a great belief in the mantras of Khamlangba, the presiding deity, process, training about the heat, efficiency and temperature of furnace due to which this traditional technology was guarded as a secret science. Nungphal which is utilised for iron smelting is a type of stone which is red in colour and rarely found in other places except the sunny hill areas. The stone from water, Loknung and shoddy area is easily broken.

Experts in this technology can easily touch the red hot iron charcoal by hand. The science and technology was lost in oblivion since the deposit is not self-sufficient, fuel consumption is too much and not economically viable in the context of growing population. The product is not encouraging as the proportion of the ore, labour and fuel were not balanced and expenses were not supported by anybody/quarter. The quantity of iron products from the local deposit was no doubt wonderful in my experience. A particular type of furnace design was invented by Potsangbam Tomal Singh, a veteran Congressman and I.N.A. freedom fighter in the forties of the 19th century. At present their secret knowledge is not being used and has met with little success and decline.

The iron mines have been filled up by fields and have been occupied by Don Bosco missionaries for their buildings. Remains of smelting sites at Kakching, documents from the royal court and their knowledge did strike during my tours and stays at Kakching and other areas since 1960.

Preparation of dying from herbs and vegetables

Colouring was obtained from plants, animal sources, the earth, the flowers, barks and seeds of fruits. They had a sound knowledge of dying and colour combinations. Permanent black colour produced from the leaves of a Herb called Kum and bark of Kuhi tree (castanetsis species) by the Meiteis deserve our praise and exceeds the black colours produced with synthetic dyes in matters relating to light, water, soap and in brightness. Other colour were not so praise worthy.

They had a good knowledge of extracting active principles from the leaves of a Herb called Kumna. The leaves are boiled in water and kept for sometime till they become tender and then they are made to decay or to

ferment in a pot. The fluid becomes black. The scum is removed from time to time stored in another pot. Kum Chingba process ranges from 1 month to 1 or 2 years. The longer period, the greater is the yield.

The dying process is effected through the dipping of the fibre (after washing) in the black fluid and immersed for about 6 days. Then it is dried in the shade and again dipped in the dye till the colour is perfectly black. By this process, the extraction of active principles takes a long time in the absence of another quicker method. Fast black colour is also obtained from the bark of Kuhi tree after keeping for quite a long time.

Its importance lies in the fact that it is obligatory for Meitei women to use Meitei kum phanek, lower garment of black colour for women which becomes shining after several washing.

Ureirom Tabi (red or orange colour)– Traditional method of dying colour from vegetable is quite common in early days, Ureirom Tabi is an instanced in point. The colour is fast to light and less toxic. The dye is prepare from fruit-peels of Ureiom by boiling with water. The fruit peels after cutting into pieces are dried and made powder. 100 grams of the powder when mixed with 500 ml of water and boiled in a water bath will give 256 ml of coloured dye. The cloth is then dipped into the solution and then the mixture is boiled for 10 minutes. After removing the cloth and drying in the sun, the dye is prepared in a successful way. The materials commonly needed for the process are Tin can, kerosene stove or fuel, water bath, measuring cylinder, knife or scissors. This dying survives on the preparation and dying of khudei (smaller type of male dhoti) and Pungou Phanek (a kind of lower garment for females). The female garment is used for all ceremonial and religious function without any exception.

In the past it is extensively spread at every house-hold level. The Marings (hill tribe) and Andros (scheduled caste people in the Nongmaijing hill are experts in collecting the barks of the kuhi tree in the Hill. But the art of dyeing is exclusively done by Meitei women. Natural dyes are less toxic, lest pollutant and echo-friendly.

Similarly ink prepared from the leaves of mango, tengali (lamp black) with some pieces of iron at the time of boiling is brilliant. It has flourished during the rule of Maharajas and has been carried out for centuries among the puya writers, singers, musicians and painters before the modemisation process.

Pottery Technique in Manipur

Pottery in Manipur is one of the handicrafts of the lois/scheduled caste groups(particularly of the people living in loi villages such as Sekmai, Amdro, Chairen, Thongjao, Thoubalkhong and tribals of Oinam (a Mao tribe), Senapati District and Nungbi Tangkhul village in Ukhrul Districts carrying the culture of the race to which they belong. Pottery making as eye witness from the early times till today is based on the locally available brown clay rock powder for the Andro lois sand for Chairen lois Brown reddish and black clay for Thongjao loi village, rock material for Nungbi

Tangkhul villages with which rural women for of the schedule caste villages from times immemorial have been carrying on without modern methods of wheel, block electricity machine system, etc. Nowadays in the manufacture of shreds in Thongjao the base of wheel is adopted almost every house in pot making villages follow this occupation in proper season.

Hand made technique at present consists of sumbll/wooden anvil-like instrument soft sticks to beet wooden board for pasting husking stick, piece of coarse cloth for wiping the pot Sword like bamboo. It involves careful steps viz. production firing decoration, colouring with kuhi leaves and flower yento and cropping plant cold kang. The artisans have attained proficiency in their world that they produced various items which are attractive to lock at and demanded in worked market. Pots of ancient times viz. Thumphoo (for salt) Chengphu (to keep rice). Kharung (to store water or alcohol), drinking and cooking pots of different patterns and shaves. The common represented form is a globular vessel with neck and items of strips in the boarder, like the Hindu kumars/potters, we noticed that these people did not prepare clay images/idols since they are confined to the preparation for pots only.

The products in connections with pottery and earthen pitcher have a great impact on Manipuri mind. The belief goes that it was obligatory to use Manipuri made pots for ritualistic and religious purposes. A Manipuri authoritative text called Loyumba Silen provides welcome particulars in which the different codified works, professions etc, are of religious characters from the king. Pot making for the royal family by the people of Thoubalkhong and Leisham after collecting clay from Kongba and Haokha with particular dress and pujah materials found mention in the old text. These groups are no longer in existence at present. Most of the Loi people with different surnames used to prepare it. They are treated as unclean class in Manipuri Society.

The skill of Loi community has been of high order although they did not receive the attention of modern technologists and state Government. Archaeological finds from the excavated areas of Keibung, Sekta kei and hill areas testify to their achievement and their traditional sources of income. Pottery as practised in Manipur is also pollution free and sustainable for their life.

Pottery/ceramics of different types were on show in industrical fairs, exhibitions and workshops sponsored by state Industrial Departments, Mutua Museums, peoples Imphal Museums, kakching, held from time to time. Manipuri specialist in this art like Thongjao Nilamani Devi represents the State in many industrial exhibitions in Delhi and won awards. She had made foreign tours like U.S.A., Japan, etc. under the exchange programme of the Government of India for her works.

Concluding Reflections

I now conclude this paper with the following remarks. Throughout the paper my purpose is to give an idea of the extent to which these arts and industries have advanced in the past before the adoption of modern techniques. Within the limits of this discussion it has not been possible for me to discuss and develop the observation on handloom products, textiles agricultural practices, forestry, Health care and their connection with the general decline and Government's indifference we have drawn here. We record a few words as to the issues raised and solutions offered.

(1) The paper touches such areas as Iron Smelting and manufacturing, stone crafts and dyeing which received a setback at present on account of resources, market and technology constraints with the result that they are about to be extinct. My survey shows that dyeing and iron smelting have disappeared completely. But pottery is still continuing in a small way. State support and co-operation must replace the hostile attitude to the traditional arts and crafts.

(2) Indigenous vision, sustainable growth and development have been keenly felt by the public in these years when there was no regular bus service. Plane/air service and consequent failure of supply of essential commodities in the time of violence, loss of life and unending suffering of innocent men, women and children. Revival in a new form of our ancient science and technology is a workable approach to handle the delicate issues.

(3) The panchayets and apolitical voluntary organisations would take up the initiative in this delicate but vital concern Modernising the ancient system within reasonable limits is the remedy to save the situation. If we succeed there will be a great impact, not only on Manipur but on India. Otherwise the days are not far off when our products and traditional arts will be confined to Museum collection and thereby pushing a larger number of population out of their profession.

(4) In sccio-economic and religious life of the Manipuris the artisan classes viz. Pot makers, salt manufactures and black smiths of Kakching occupy an inferior position in as much as supply industries products to the propel in connection. with rites, festivals, etc. Marketing of Meitei, different pitchers, jars and iron works are done by Manipuri keithelkabis/market women in separate seats of the main bazaar.

(5) Museums viz. peoples' museum, Kakthing and Mutuwa museum, Imphal have been making a definite contribution in regenerating the past culture as well as helping the economic organisation of this country by emphasising the importance of handicrafts. The products and collection have contributed much to public knowledge.

Notes and References

1. It has been my pleasant duty to visit stone making shops in Bishnupur Bazar, Kakching, Wangu and Sugnu markets since 1980. Hand work and power device are developing side by side at present in Bishnupur. R.D.O., Lamsang Centre is advancing motor and some modern equipment's for electric devices in 1988.
2. W. Biren Singh, the senior most expert in modern stone work centre gave training to 6 local trainees in 1992 under the initiative of the Government of India through the Development Commissioner of Manipur Government. He revealed the same to me when I visited his centre in Lamangdong/Bishnupur on 9.4.95.
3. I have spent my years since 1963 researching Manipuri crafts, minerals and artistic works in Kakching iron deposits and salt mines such as Shikhong, Ningel, Chandrakhong, etc.
4. B.R. Pemperton, Report on the Estern Frontier of India, Gauhati Assam, 1966, pp 32-33.
5. As for Iron works in Kakching, Pemberton observes that iron ore in the form of litaniferous oxydulated type is extracted from the beds of small streams south of Thoubal and the hills near Langathel. The presence of ore is inferred from the withered appearance of the grass growing above it. The soil has been washed away in the rainy season. Persons with knowledge in this work thrust an iron headed spear into the ground and examined the smaller particles of iron ore adhering to it because of the magnetic property being acquired by iron. The loss in the smelting or iron ore amounted to 50% and consumption of fuels was in a large quantity. So the industry was dead although their technology was sound.
6. B.C. Allen, District Gazetters of Assam, Part-II Shillong 1905-7, section on Economic condition of Manipur.

19

AN EVALUATION OF ANTI-DOWRY MOVEMENT IN MANIPUR

Karl Marx observed "Social progress can be measured with precision by the social position of the female sex." It is held desirable to study how for women in Manipur have attained their social status.

Manipuri society follows the method whereby the marriage is conducted mainly on trust, love and uniting two persons in a human manner. Women's active participation in public affairs, initiated by Mahatma Gandhi, etc. and a number of post Independent legal measures like the Constitution, Hindu Code, Hindu Succession Act. Dowry Prohibition Act have given some status of equality of women.

The main problem before a woman in the modern context is the offensive custom of dowry. Marriage remains a woman's only destiny. The post-second world war period witnessed a notable rise in the dowry system.

We find mention of **Aunpot**/dowry in our **holy** ***Puyas***/ texts. Presentation of clothes and money by the brides' friends finds a place in early Manipuri society. Bride price is spoken of as custom among the Naga tribes of Manipur. When princess Keirunghanbi of Khuman Kingdom was given in marriage to prince Naothingkhong, heir apparent of Meitei kingdom during 600-700 years, a list of dowry is made. Included in them are clean utensils, gold pieces, neckless, horses, elephants and maid servants (Aunnai). Our ballad singers gave elaborate accounts of arrangements of dowry in units of hundreds when princess Thoibi's marriage with Khamba is announced. The colourful procession of the bride to the groom's place and special dowry made terms of 100s to suit the occasion are reminiscent of the modern processions. The number of buyers exceed the no of sellers in the market of Moirang. It is very significant to note that dowry arranged by the Aristocratic class of Meitei Society reveals their love for the daughters along with their social status.

Problems in Manipur Since 1949

The impact of modernism in dowry system can be seen by its increasing gift in a fantastic way in Manipur after the Second World War. The multiplication of modern lists is spreading like wild fire. More so in well-to-do and aristocrative families of Manipur valley. Before the war the bridal presents consists of gold ornaments, shirts, garments, cups, vessels, plates, jugs, etc. Now-a-days, cars, Scooters, Lunae, plots of cultivable land, T.V., stoves, sofa, filter, Refrigerator, Video Cassettes, films etc. are the minimum items of dowry. Under no circumstances these are displayed for show. At times the presents are displayed for public show and can be withdrawn after the disposal of the marriage crowd. The grooms side and

the general public will evaluate whether the dowry is up to the mark, is herement for a mere show. Misunderstanding between the grooms and bride's party create some problems. Women from rich and educated families found it difficult to part with their worthy cloths, jewellery and personal belongings after their marriage.

The evils of the dowry system like the cancer kill the vitality of Manipuri society. Its effects in the rest of India can be obtained in the murder of female children by parents with the help of medical science (by spending Rs. 500/-). Suicide of young maidens (e.g. 3 girls like Mamta, Alka and Poonam Sahu by hanging in 1989), late marriage of educated girls, unmatched marriages, breaking of the marriage settlement on the pretext of dowry, the child marriage to avoid dowry, the criminal activities of poor fathers of girls, low standard of living, family dispute, mental diseases, hindrance to female education and harsh treatment to the daughter-in-law in the hands of mother-in-law. Modern society in full of the unbearable cry of the daughters. The independent status of woman is reflected in the outmoded social norms and women remain a second class citizen and burden to the parents.[3] Many fathers attempted to earn money through illegal means to get a suitable match for their daughter and to give adequate dowry. Persons who fail to do this sometimes die with the motive to marry off their daughter. Daughters of aristocratic family try to have the suitable partners by the show of money, property or valuable gifts which they have to give to the groom party for the marriage. The system is conducive to the marriage of ugly and uneducated girls to a certain extent.

The dowry problem is associated with women's problem. It is not without its advantage. Considered from the standpoint of the Bridegroom the bride with adequate dowry can live better than and one with less dowry. It assures the establishment of the new household of the newly married couple. There is no harm in accepting it as the inalienable value and prosperity of the women, the personification of Mother Prakriti.

2) Aunpot/dowry in its true sense is different from the bridal price or sale of the girl like a commodity in the market by taking money from the groom's party. It is an obligation on the part of parents to give dowry to the daughters who are really fond of it. In fact they live in their dreams and fantasies.

The merits do not count much before the evils. The problem is vague on account of the change of money value. Poverty, unemployment, choice of suitable partners, complication to get the bride groom from a technical profession, and well stabilised status. Marriage has become a contract rather than a sacrament or religious affairs. Monetary consideration is allowed to intervene in the sacred rite. The custom of later growth that prevails in Manipuri society to-day must have frightened the earlier law givers. The lady's status must not be measured in terms of dowry system and fantastic ideas of Ijat and competitions (symbols of high respectability).

Economic Condition of Manipur

Obstacles in the social and economic progress of Manipur have come to the fore at present. Our population is increasing 20 lakhs (1935486) in 1992. Manipur valley contains as much as 65.4% of the total population and hills 34.6% only. The valley is thickly populated with an average of 415 persons per sq. as against 24 persons only in the hills. The rate of growth of population in the state was 3.4% per year in 1982 as against 3.7% in 1971. The growth rate of population can be treated as very high particularly in the last three decades on account of migration from Nepal, Bangladesh, Burma, etc. The analysis reveals a gap between demand and resource by reason of the high rate of population and slow socio-economic development.

The state has a greater discussion of the poverty problem. The per capita income as 1984-85 prices was estimated at Rs. 574 against Rs. 775 for all India. The annual growth rate of per capital income is 2.8% against 1.5% for the whole country. It has also a high level of poverty. 45.06 per cent of the population was below the poverty line according to the survey conducted in 1988. The population and percentage of poverty line in the Meitei inhabited areas of Imphal, Thoubal, Bishnupur, etc. are high. 70 or 80 years are not sufficient to solve the question of total eradication of poverty which is hoped to be achieved overnight through different welfare schemes and planning, new methods etc.[5]

Wastage of Money

More items-specially luxury things of about 5 lakhs are allowed in the name of gifts and dowry in Manipuri Society. The unnecessary wastage in such ceremonies has to be considered. The Manipuris are famous for competition's in this project. It is elaborate and a time consuming affairs. But contrast the dowry among the reformed groups such as the Arya Samajists and Brama Samajists was simple. The Hindus in Andhra, U.P., Bihar, Rajasthan etc. as contrasted with the reformist practice have overtressed the Ijat through unnecessary expenses. Social criticisms make marriage and dowry too costly and even a middle class man find it hard to establish a satisfactory settlement, have alone the poor man. The state or society does not take cognisance of such serious crisis. To quote a report from centre for Informal Education and Development study, Bangalore" A whole range of abuse against women has been pushed into the personal, domestic and private value which has made crime against them invisible. Dowry deaths and wife burning, for instance are considered individual family problems and not social malaise and therefore not political. Dowry cases along with crimes against women went unreported as the official sources had limitations. Hindi Belt with lower literary percentage claims more victims. U.P. alone accounts for 2074 dowry deaths. Delhi bears the distinction of having 111 dowry deaths in 1991. Sati (burning of widow) is viewed merely as a custom and not barbaric murder of women.

Dowry problems here as in the rest of India are concerned with middle and lower middle class phenomenon. Educated brides face the consequences of social victimisation. The problem is not so alarming in Manipur.

Manipur society must be better off without these haphazard and luxurious usage. Before raising the standard of living and giving equal balance why should the parents sell away their land, shops and become debtors.[6]

The following suggestions are put forward for further action

1. The current loud thinking on the part of the Government to threaten the violation of IPC Section 498 (A) is fraught with dire consequences.

2. A special effort will be and must be made by all progressive thinkers of this part of India to follow the Draft National Perspective for Women; The National Commission on self-employed Women.

3. The constitution and legislation have assured women's equity and equality, these assurances, viz. equal education of men and women as enshrined in the constitution and legislative enactment of Anti-Dowry Act in Manipur are to be effectively implemented.

4. Social excommunication of extravagant dowry is an effective step for reformation.

5. In case of women and children the State Government often show some indifference for the implementation of the family courts Act and Dowry. Prohibition Amendment Act, 1984. More suggestion in the shape special women's protection cell (as in Andhra Pradesh) have come up in recent years so that the attitude of the police compounded with cumbersome procedures may not victimise the women.

6. Peoples active participation in the social programme and Youth movement against the evil trends will close the chapter of offensive dowry and will open up within the society a healthy system and constructive national scene. It is to be noted that laws are good and sound in our place, but the enforcing agencies are not co-ordinating their efforts, nor are they competent enough to deliver the goods. Activists must work for crusading social change.

7. The evils of dowry can be uprooted from our society through the increase of women education, incidence of inter-caste marriage, inter state marriage and anti-dowry and simple advertise, must in the National papers and widely circulated magazines.

8. It is desirable on the part of the parents to take precautionary measures. A basic record of goods given to their daughters at the time of marriage must be maintained. This can to a large extent help in identifying the culprit.

Notes and References

1. Vide an article titled 'Manipuri Khunaida Nupigi Aunpot (women's Dowry in Manipuri Culture past and Present) by : A.C. Netrajit published in the magazine of D.M. College of Arts and Commerce, 1988-89.
2. Hindu Marriage Ceremony-a paper read by Dr. S.B. Chatterji, Calcutta-700047 at AIOC-33rd Session, 1986, Calcutta.
3. Dr. M. Kriti Singh, **Religious Developments in Manipur in the 18th and 19th Centuries,** Imphal, 1982 Section on Marriage and Dowry, Chapter-III.
4. My observation since 1978.

20

FAMOUS INDOLOGISTS OF MANIPUR

The purpose of this paper into being about the life and works of some noted indologists of Manipur who achieved a certain importance. for integrating Manipur with the rest of India. The following companies names when works were made proper by records and by us.

Angom Gopi-belonged to the intellectual and spiritual aristocracy of Meitei race. Steeped in Meitei *Puyas* (sacred lores) and the classical literature of India he disciplined himself to sriki meaningfully and purposefully for integrating Manipuri with Indian culture. He brought to bear on his task not only vast learning but a fine sensibility. Scholar and poet he, was, a ripe and good one, no doubt, he was much more, a far sighted statesman set on the path leading to Manipur's freedom from Burmese domination and restoration of King Jai Simha/Karta in the midst of political turmoil.

Cradled in Meitei dialect and steeped in Hindu Purainc epic and literature in Sanskrit and Bengali he made the best of both worlds-Manipuri and India, Past and Medieval. His translations of the cantos of Kritivashi Ramayan and Kashidashi Mahabharata have remained till now the authentic version of Meitei epics. The translations of Aranya, Kishkindhiya, Sundur, Langka, Uttar Kanda of the Ramayana, and Parikshit of Gangadash Sen were written by him. Parikshit was completed on Thursday, 12 Phairel/from Feb. 1725 A.D. (during the reign of Maharaj Garibniwaz (1709-1748). These works were not word for word translations but a recreation of the epic themes in Manipur then times. His 4 volumes of **Malem Leishemlon Aribą** (old creation story of the universe) is an attempt to correlate Meitei puya to the Hindu cosmological theorise. Researches however reveal that he was writing the same jointly with Khongnang Thaba and in his celebrated book "Laining thou Sanamahi Nongchup Haram Khongdaba" he enunciated the doctrine that Lord Sanamahi, the celebrated deity of every household went to the west to ask the preachers to popularise the Vaishnava cult in Manipur with his approval. By his another name, i.e. Angom Chaoba he is thought to write another book "Larei Lathup" which contained the loose moral character and secrets of the members of the royal family-hitherto unknown to the common people.

He was a great friend of Maharaja Bhagyachandra/Karta. Once King Bhagyachandra called himself a Khongjai (tribal) and visited Vishnupur/Lamangdong from **Tekhao** (Assam) via the **Tongjei Maril** route. He stayed at the house of Angom Gopi and revealed his identity to him after staying in Assam for many years. They thought that Manipur had reached the lowest depths of decay during their time due to the betrayal of

Khelei Nungnang Telheiba, the maternal uncle of king Bhagyachandra. In a very challenging and forceful manner he questioned the authority of Khelei Nungnang Telheiba and coined another name for the king as the Chingthang Khomba-the one who can kill the stone representing Khelei Nungnang.

The Samkalpa of installing the idol of Shri Govindaji after carving out of the jackfruit tree at Vasmukha hill was thought of by King Bhagyachandra as revealed by God in his dream. He summoned all eminent court scholars for identifying the said hill Shri Angom Gopi by his deep astrological calculation found out the location at the back side of Phoudem village and south of Nongmaiching hill, Following him King Jai Singha came in person with his people and succeeded in identifying the hill in Kaina village.

The origin of **Wari Liba**/story telling is traced to King Bhagyachandra's time when Gopi mentioned in his conversation one of the sons of Pakhangba, the ancestor of the Ningthouja dynasty who went to Burma and became its King by defeating the tribes. The credit for touching Kaibarol (grammar of Manipur) is also given to Angom Gopi when he talked of the same to King Charairongba (1700-1709). See also Numit Kappak during 1748-51.

His two daughters Lokeswari and Lulleswari were given in marriage to Maharaja Chandrakirti Singh.

He had an argument with Chiksa Chaksha, a famous warrior on be use of royal use tomary drums.

Wahengba Madhobram

Wahengbam Mani popularly known as Wahengba Madhobram figured in my mind in oriental scholarship since my research career. He belonged to Wahengba surname and Luwang clan-the group that has produced important personaties of Manipuri culture. He flourished during the time of Rajarshi Bhagyachandra (1763-98) and Labyanachandra Maharaja (1798-1901). He served as one of the able courtiers of Maharaj Bhagyachandra and accompanied Prince Nabananda for the journey to the west in connection with the cutting and carrying out of the big tree for purpose of making royal boat. For 2 months of perilous journey in the jungle by the royal order he and Mayengba Vrindavan gave their best to the party by telling the story **Virat parva** portion of the **Mahabharata** of Kashiram Das after making a translation of the same into Manipuri. He was a profound scholar of Bengali, Sanskrit and Manipur. He thought that to evaluate Manipuri thought and Religion, a proper grounding in Hindu Philosophy and thought was a pre-requisite and had therefore delved deep into Hindu shastras and old Meitei texts. He is honoured as a deep scholar of Manipuri philosophy and Ethics, particularly Vaishnava theology. His **Langlon**-a treatise on Meitei morals and maxims is a standing monument to his profound knowledge. **Langlon** is hailed by the scholars as the Chankya sloka of the Meitheis. W. Yumjao Singh, an Indologist was of the view that

Madhobram was also connected with the work of writing such medieval books as **Sonamanik Chingthangkhomba Maharaj Ganga Changba, Shamu Phaba** (catching of elephant by Maharaja bhagyachandra while in Ahom court in Assam). He had his considerable hand in the revision of **Cheitharol Kumbaba**, a most authentic Royal diary during the reign of Maharaja Bhagyachandra. He was also a keen student of Sanskrit Grammar. He was a symbol of the embodiment of Meitei culture in relation to Indian culture. He was no less alive to the beauties of literature. In fact his novel (Sonamanik) is said to be the earliest novel written in Manipuri language. He was simple, thoughtful in manner and without any vanity in his ways. Impressed much by his attainments in indological aspects, so admirably done by him he was being considered "Madhobram Wahengba who excelled in singing songs, wise enough in the science of making suitable song words." His medieval Manipuri maxims were extensively quoted by many writers. Its verses were quoted too by modern writers. He embellished to the wording and language construction of every composition to be in a form presentable to the court in such works as **Dhananjoy Laibu Ningba.** In my humble opinion "Any one who dives into the ocean of Meitei old manuscripts written by Wahengba Madhob and other pandits is sure to emerge as an enlightened persons with the treasures of Manipuri civilisation."

(Quite a large number of warned Meitei court Scholars work busy writing, compiling or considering research for the Manipuri Vaishnavas. Mention can be made of the contemporaries of W. Madhobran viz. Wangkhei Pandit Yoperam, writer of Manipuri/chronicle, Mashil, painter, seluptor and warrior also, prince Nabanaba yubarj, author of Mahabharat virat Parva, Labanga singh Konthongimba writer of Ram Nangaba, Longjom Parsuram, author of Mahabharat Ashwamedha Yajna, etc. who were consulted by Maharaj like Jai Singh, Labnyachandra, Mahuchandra Chourajit, it is all matters relating to state organisation, installation of Shri Govindji and compilation of chronicle. All of them are the most powerful persons in maintaining the legal and political system in Manipur. However, they are not discussed there in detail for reasons of space.)

Two Chandrasiddhantas

Manipur achieved a remarkable level of achievement in all aspect culture and civilisation-Music, Dances, Polo, Astrology and other branches of investigation in Indian context during the reign of Rajarshi Bhagyachandra. He was more interested in patronising cultural aspects then the military conquests. The fate of Manipur was hanging in the balance during his time as the unified Brmese power invaded Manipur several times and devastated the country in a cruel manner curiously enough, many poets, scholars and ojas of dance and music were born and flourished with distinction in Manipur under his reign.

It is his policy to arrange the assembly of court poets, scholars and ojas of different institutions and used to confer suitable titles on deserving

Pandits whom he used to authorise for different works. One such distinguished scholar whom he has honoured and gave suitable award was Khumbong Maniram for his proficiency in astrology. The saintly king opened many institutions and established an era known as Chandrabada era under the supervision of a Chandra Siddhanta (Proof of the moon) for the Manipur Vaishnavas, King Gourshyam, elder brother of Bhagyachandra had an agreement with Bhagyachandra that each brother must reign as king for 5 years alternately. The origin of Chandrabad era is traced during the fist reign of King Bhagyachandra (1759-1962). Khumbong Maniram did a great deal of pioneering research work in the dissemination of Indological knowledge (Sanskrit and Bengali) about the relation of Manipuri grammar to Sanskrit grammar (Panini, saraswat Vyakaran, etc.). He lived a pious life as an ardent devotee of Shri Govindajee, the royal deity. By order of Rajarshi Bhagyachandra he prepared the table of Chandrabad era with the help of Bhagyabati Thakur and completed the same on Thursday, 12th Hiyangei, 1760 A.D. We had come across 5 more Manipuri scholars who were in some ways involved in writing this book "Chandrabad" for about 5 months. After the release of this treatise king Bhagyachandra was highly pleased and the Brahmanas and Vaishnavas were rewarded pieces of gold, silver and other presents including one elephant. Khumbong Maniram was made the title winner of Chandra Siddhanta with the award of new royal clothes, gold, silver and prestigious ornaments, the distinction of exempting his family members from all tiresome duties and forced system and decoration of enjoying rent free cultivable lands.

He was a highly cultured man with knowledge of Meitei lore. Maharaja Labyanyachandra son and successor to king Jai/Bhagyachandra discussed with him the importance and obligation of maintaining the games of Meitei Foot hockey and wrestling as means of promoting physical culture. The king asked searching questions to him. The country has been able to achieve some progress through his impressive advice.

Khumbong Devakishor Singh, Junior Chandra Siddhanta

He was the grandson of Khumbong Maniram already well known to the astrological public. He was the Panji Sanglakpa/Head Astrologer and Chandra Siddhanta in the court of Maharaja Gambhir Singh (1825-34), son of Maharaja Bhagyachandra. True to the family tradition he has been in the astrological field for many years in a scientific manner. By royal order, he wrote **Laghu Jyotish Chandrika** which was so planned that it deals with Varshagati, astrological table prepared from the latitude and longitude of Imphal, Vaishnava festivals and synthesis between Hindu manners and Meitei customs and traditions. It was welcomed by the royal court as the simplified version of the Chandrabad text as the approved addition to the existing treatise on the sacred text and it gives the accuracy it richly deserves after hearing his explanation on Wednesday, 1st Sajiphu (March-April) in 1831=(1753 + 78). Its content forms a part of daily calculation in every home in every village towns, temples, etc. It was praised by the

assembly of learned scholars, Brahmans, Princes and nobles in the Mandob of Shri Govindajee.

This era was reckoned from the year of assumption of power by king Kairencha in Kali year 3881/784 A.D. after driving the Tais or Shans out of Manipur. This Chandrabad era was used in all chronicles, religious texts, coins, inscriptions and Manipuri almanac dedicated to Shri Govindajee annually. Gold coin issued by Maharaja Gambhir Singh in 1043 i.e. 1831 A.D. seemed to confer greater distinction than having other manuscripts and epigraphic records. Jyotish Chandrika became an approved text for the Manipuri Vaishnavas. Manipur never forgets, Kairencha's concern for reviving the lost glories and institutions Unique in its history and culture.

Haodijamba Chaitanya

Among a large number of Meitei Indologists, whose names have fallen into oblivion, the name of H. Chaitanya, who was at the early period of the British regime, *viz.* (roughly 1870-1930), the revolutionary and editor of texts in archaic Meitei script, has been rescued by the editing and compiling of his 5 books of late R.K. Sananal Singh, B.Com., M.C.S. in 1982 and I shall briefly refer to his works and his time of activity.

H. Chaitanya was the son of Gokul Singh alias Palando Singh who served as the Sawari of Colonel Kiting, \Chief Commissioner of Assam by order of Maharaja Chandrakirti of Manipur for 15 years. He was born in Shillong, the then capital of Assam and received modern education in Shillong Mission School. He was well versed in Bengali, English and Hindustani. After completion of 15 years in Assam service his father came to Manipur along with his son Chaitanya.

He married Ibemhal Devi, grand daughter of ex-Maharaj Devendra of Manipur who bore him some children.

After 1891 Anglo-Manipuri war he acted as Postal Overseer of Cachar-Manipur route for 2 years. He was able to appraise any situation and was opposed to the relationship of Major Maxwell, Political Agent to Princess Sanatombi, the daughter of Maharaja Surachandra Singh and drafted the application on behalf of Sanatombi's former husband N. Manikchand Singh in connection with the payment of Rs. 200/-as the customary price. On the occasion some question arose in a case for forcibly utilising the service of some passengers in connection with the repairing of suspension bridge and on this ground he was suspended from service in 1895 by the Political Agent without investigation.

In 1893 A. Porteous, Political Agent enlisted his co-operation in collecting Meitei *Puyas*/mss. By this time Major Maxwell came back to Manipur as Col. Maxwell P.A. and state superintendent and embarrassed him by putting him in the jail for one week and expelled him from Manipur. In 1905 some Manipuris submitted a memorandum to Lord Curjon in which they raised objection to Maxwell's unlawful relationship with princess Sanatombi. As a result Maxwell was transferred from Manipur in this year. He was succeeded by Colonel Shakespeare as P.A.

and state Superintendent. He revived the case and appointed him as clerk in the Hill after allowing his return. After 5 years he took rest as he was suspended for some time for his involvement in a disputed case of Revenue Department.

In 1915 the first Satyagraha movement took place in Manipur and it assumed a serious turn and disturbed the normal work of the Manipur administration for some months. This pothang movement/agitation against forced labour is a well-remembered event in the history of Manipur's freedom struggle. For his instigation he was driven out of Manipur by Political Agent Colonel Kall Saheb vide his order April 19, 1915. Chaitanya promptly wrote a series of letters from Imphal and later from Silchar (Assam) stating convincingly to allow his stay in his ancestral place. He being a citizen of British India (birth in Shillong), champion the cause of general public in their fight against forced labour and help in the quarrel between the Political Agent and Manikchand over the legitimate demand for princess Sanatombi's hand. His appeal was not considered by the British authority. He spent the rest of his life by settling in Cachar Mulugram and Rangpur in Assam with his family members in a miserable way.

Chaitanya appears as a political figure. He was possibly the satyagrahi to suffer on a political issue. He was perhaps one of the Meiteis who gave a form and content to the concept of democratic form of government.

As for his ability and obedience in official duties, state authorities like Porteous, Babu Bamacharan Mukherjee,, Superintendent of State Karmacharis, Deputy Magistrate/Collection Pheijudin Mohammad, Sub-Deputy Collector Abdul Wahid and W.A. Cosgrave, Vice-President of Manipur State Darbar gave a vivid picture.

H. Chaitanya is said to have written and edited 5 Manipuri books, of which they are examined by me.

(1) Manipur Itihas, 1890, printed in Calcutta Baptist Mission, published by Political Agent of Manipur.

(2) Takhel Ngamba, Sylhet, 1902.

(3) Bhagyachandra, pages are found missing and no year is mentioned.

(4) Khahi Ngamba, Sylhet, 1900 A.D.

(5) Khamba Thoibigi Warine (This is the epic story of Khamba and Thoibi), 1899.

(6) Khamba Thoibigi Warine-Bengali translation of the same by him.

He was the first Meitei scholar to edit and publish the old sacred text and **Korbek** in printing form.

Manipur Itihas-This is the first printed book on the history of Manipur. The name of the editor is not mentioned in the book but it can be easily surmised that he must have edited the mss during this period as he was the only person to deal with this line. The book published by the Political Agent of Manipur before the outbreak of Anglo-Manipuri-war is a history of Manipur from the 1st century down to the beginning of the reign of Maharaja Surachandra. True to the early tradition the book is written in

19th century style from the Hindunised standpoint without any punctuation marks. British administration has done a great service to the cause of Manipuri culture by its patronage and policy of such a person.

W. Yumjao Singh

(1844-1953) Orientalist, Philologist and pioneer Archaeologist, lost his parents at tender age. His foster mother fell into financial difficulties and he did manual work for family maintenance. He had a brilliant academic career in schools. After passing Entrance Examination in 1908 from Sylhet government High Schools he entered sylhet government College but could not complete F.A. due to bad health; served as a teacher in the Johnostone School till 1915. In 1914 he was dismissed form govt. service for drafting a public memorandum in connection with the abolition of **pothang** (serving as potter without payment) system. Through the good office of the Headmaster and vice president of M.S.D. he was reinstated on ground of the success of the allied Armies in 1914. Superintendent of the newly established government press for 29 years (1915-44), member of Manipur state Darbar (1944-45), Rental officer in charge of war compensation works (1945-47); Also a member of Indian Historical research commission and a corresponding member of Historical and Antiquarian studies, Gauhati. He was awarded Gavesana Siromani of Manipur Sahitya parisad on 1964. The state government appointed him to the rarest post of Darbar member in recognition of his services in the area of historical, linguistic and orchard local regard.

All through his life he had been a devout Vaisnava since retirement he had been devoting his time to reinstallation of the idol of Madov Mahaji, the ancestral deity of his family, construction of temples and **mandop** and performing rites of his late mother.

Of his many works the best known **Lolgi wayel** Part I and II, **Manipur Itihas, Langlol,** (Manipuri) **Religions Belief of Ancient Manipur, General Remarks on Manipuri Language, Report on the Archaeological studies in Manipur Bulletin-I, Archaic Meitei,** Translation of **Cheitharol Kumbaba** (Royal Diary) etc.

He widened the horizon of Manipuri studies through intensive research and Archaeological studies. His Archaeological excavation from 1933 to 1939 established him as the dominant influence in subsequent indological studies. The Manipur Administration popularised his name through reports in official publications although his reputation rested more on the study of historical periods than on pre-historic ones.

His command over English, Sanskrit, Bengali, Manipuri both archaic and modern was of a high order. He started translation the **cheitharol Kumbaba** into English (from 33 to 1830) in his lifetime. The political Agent donated Rs. 10,000/-for its publication. It is yet to be published at present. His history of Manipur (English and Manipuri) are excellent manuals for the young learners and research scholars. He also popularised

the critical edition of texts like **Langlol** by W. Madhobram which contained the moral lessons in archaic Manipuri.

In his books, **Religious Belief of ancient Manipur, An early History of Manipur, etc,** he attempted to identify the present Manipur with that of the Mahabharata and took the bold step of holding Manipuri religion as a product of Vedic Hinduism.

In his books on Philology and Manipuri grammar he wanted to make the people aware into the theory that Manipuri grammar is broad based Sanskrit grammar in spite of some modification and Meitei script is derived from Devangari script which was known to the people as early as the 2nd Century A.D.

L. Ibungohal Singh

L. Ibungohal Singh (March 26 1895-9th June' 1966) was closely associated with Manipur Sahitya Parishad as its founder President and President for a number of terms, many graduate colleges of Manipur and cultural institutions of Music and culture. He played a notable part in the recognition of Manipuri language as a major vernacular subject under Calcutta and Gauhati Universities. Being a close associate of Raj Pandit Atombapu sharma he continued to function as the chairman of Atombapu research centre till the time of death.

The main editor of **Cheitharol Kumbaba** under the auspices of Manipur Sahitya Parshad, author of Books (1) Narshing, Drama 1922, (2) Babrubahan pokpa, Drama in 1925, (3) Meaning of Mayang, 1960 (4) Wari ahumna Tamphasana, Novel in 1960, (5) Manipur-Essay in Manipuri, 1957, (6) Beginners Anglo-Manipuri Dictionary 1965 (7) Atma Jiban/Autobiography in Manipuri 1970 (8) Introduction to Manipur 1960; a regular contributor to souvenirs, Sahitya Journal, Ngasi, a Manipuri daily paper, a talker in A.I.R. on cultural aspects of Manipur he was an elite with legal and cultural leanings. In any move for the identity of Manipuries and Manipuri language the people had his inspiring guidance. The book Harasangklalol on is now lost open as sinu no major printed copy in both.

After receiving education in Silcher, modern Bangladesh, Gauhati, at the financial support of the Maharaja, Sir Churanchand Singh of Manipur he was the first Law graduate in Manipur. He fostered Bengali, Sanskrit, English and Puya studies of the Manipuries in this part of India.

He was nothing if not varied and versatile. Darbar Member in charge of forest, A.D.C. to his Highness, Sir Churachand; Member Sadar Panchayet court, Judge, chief court, Manipur District and session judge of Manipur, jurist, constitution maker founder of progressive party of Manipur, founder principal of Law college, Scholar of Manipuri Vaisnavism, a fine player (including polo Kirtan singer, etc. he has all these and its role he made distinct contribution to the course of Manipur. He met Mahatma Gandhi as a student when he visited Assam and tried to remove the misunderstanding about the Manipuries by assessing the correct picture of 1891. As a scholar and elite he has been prolific, his writings therein had

the impress of his pro hindu-pro-Aryan leanings and Vaisnava reflections his opinion on Meitei customary law/usage, culture of Manipur reveal an orthodox point of view. His judgements on Hindunised Meitei are standard works on early Meitei customary law.

He had his close association with Prof. Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji of Calcutta and Raj Pandit Atombapu Sharma of Manipur. L. Ibungohal Singh shared many things in common with Atombapu Sarma. Both were great admirers of Manipuri Hindu Sanatanic culture; at the instance of H.H. Churachand they toured many parts of India for collection of sacred Hindu texts, co-workers of Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha, influential men in the court of the Maharaja, they developed the theory of identifying present Manipur with Manipur of the **Mahabharat** in treating the Meiteis as the descendant of the Aryans, L. Ibungohal and Dr. S.K. Chatterji used to meet in Imphal in 1947, 1965 and in Delhi to discuss among other things about Manipuri language and literature and both participated in the discussion of Making Hindi as the official language of India in 1947, and of making Hindi translation of the constitution of India under the Presidendhip of Dr. Rajendra Prasad. The author happened to be with L.Ibungohal Singh as the first editor of L.M.S. Law College Magazine and lover of Meitei culture in the latter part of his life in Imphal and could see many personal letters written to him by Dr. S.K. Chatterji. The author was in touch with Dr. Chatterji as a Ph.D. scholar twice and from conversation he could see the deep friendship, love and regard between them even after the sad demise of L.Ibungohal Singh.

Research scholars and critics used to acknowledge their indebtedness of L.Ibungohal Singh for his good points and views in his standard work "Introduction to Manipur". In his political life he founded a political party called Progressive Party and contested Second Lok Sabha election as a candidate of Inner Manipur Constituency. But he was defeated in it.

He was involved in some capacity as the member of Manipur State Museum Committee, Manipur Gazette Revision Committee, Hony. Secretary of War Front Committee during World War II and organiser of Manipur State War Front. In 1965-66 he was deputed by the Manipur Government to collect important historical records and all information concerning Manipur in the National Archives of India, New Delhi and in the National Library of Calcutta. In his second trip to Delhi he halted in Vrindaban on his way back to Manipur and he passed away at Radhakunda in his own temple on 9th June, 1966.

In short, few individuals have so done so much as he for the promotion of education, arts, literature student movement and culture. In his life time Manipur Sahtiya Parishad conferred upon him the title Gaveshana Bhusan for his untiring efforts and selfless service to Manipuri literature. As the president of Manipur Sahitya Parishad during world War II he was responsible for recognition and affiliation of Manipur Language and Literature as the Manipuri vernacular for B.A. level. It was he who

converted a special meeting of the working committee of the parrished of his Imphal Residence for submitting a list of Manipuri books (both published and unpublished) to Calcutta university in connection of the recognition of Manipuri for the purpose of the university.

The research works and writings have grown to considerable number by the discovery of such as the Manipuri Teacher (English to Manipuri and Manipuri to English), Dictionary of archaic Manipuri, Pudil (Puya), Bamon Khanthoklon (Brahman migrations) mass by me in his library. His collection included some puyas of Meitei script, books in Bengali, about songs, coins, archival documents, rare book on language, administration and law of Manipur.

Raj Pandit Atombapu Sharma

Shri Sharma earned a great reputation as an eminent Sanskrit scholar and right hand man of H.H. Sir Churachand of Manipur during the British regine. He was born on 31/1/1889 at Sagolband, of Brahman parents with traditions of vedic scholarship and worship of Vishnu image since the 15th century. He received traditional Sanskrit education from his father Pandit Nikunja Vihari Sarma Kavya, Jyotish, Alankara as well as Smriti at home. Then he was put under Nautuneshwar Vyavasthakari, Court pandit for studying Hinduism and orthodox aspects of Manipur administration. He attained proficiency as a teacher in Brahmanic teaching. He was not a hero among the University educated. He visited holy places in connection with the immersion of ashes of his parents in the Ganges and met Pandit Durgadas Lahiri in Howra/Calcutta and studies four vedas under him. He served as a teacher in local Sanskrit toll of Brahmanpur at the age of 20. Later he was appointed as a junior teacher (10th master) in Government Johnstone School on a salary of Rs. 25-2-35. Increment of Rs. 2/-was made after every 3 years. he served this institution for about 20 years handling different branches from class V to class VIII. Among his colleagues on the same staff were well known teachers viz. Kh. Madhumangol Singh, W. Yumjao Singh etc. who helped him in improving his knowledge in English. Though he did not receive formal training in English he could follow conversation, signing and conducting class works in English. His reputation as a Sanskrit scholar drew the attention of D.P.I. of Surma valley, Assam such as Dr. Gupta, S.C. Roy, etc. who used to inspect Manipur in course of their visits.

He continued the post of Sanskrit teacher till 1935. He was burdened with all sorts of assignments as he was the main scholar of King's court. By this time there were drastic changes in the administrative and religious set-up in Manipuri society. As there was no competent Brahman pandit to take charge of the King's Brahman Sabha, the supreme Hindu body in Hindu Law and practices Pandit Atombapu and to devote his time to this office. He left his teaching profession in 1935. By this time, the Meitei Revivalist group led by Naoria Phulo of Cachar challenged the evils of reactionary and conservative policy of Hinduism as practised in Manipur. Progressive

minded people also under the able leadership of jana Neta Irabot Singh gave expression to their cry, their dissatisfaction with the aristocratic and feudal regime and their demand for reform. Brahman scholars like Lalita Madhop Sharma, Bankobihari Sharma, Kashiram and Sharma supported Irabot Singh's move and became the voice of the common people against H.H. the Maharaja and his brahman Sabha. The refusal of entrance of outsiders into the Govindaji temple, great scandal of **Mangba Sengba** (purification of pollution); high charge for ceremonial purification of the common people are known to all and they are cited as some of the highlights of Pandit Atombapu Sharma's interpretation of Hinduism. The British administration has put an end to these unfortunate rules and usage's. Indeed his work harmed the cause of Hindu Vaishnavism. The hill regions of North Eastern India and in Indian side on Indo-Myan side is violative of the various aspects of democracy in modern context. For purification scandal he had fallen from the favour of the Maharaja for a short spell.

Shri Sharma changed his outlook and later participated in freedom struggle of the Congress that entered a new phase of publishing journals and spreading the teaching of nationalist Indians like Tilak, Vivekananda, Aurobindo and Gandhi. He distinguished himself in issues of politics; national affairs and set-up of Manipur administration. His teacher Nouteneswar Sharma, Vyavasthakari, the highest post for a Brahman of religious court of the king of Manipur, honoured him with the title Vidya Ratna. He received another title Gaveshana Siromani from Manipur Sahitya Parishad and Panditraj from Government Sanskrit College of Calcutta (from its Principal and Professors) for his great scholarship in Sanskritic studies. His work was mentioned by Sanskrit Commission of the Government of India and following its suggestion he was honoured with certificates of Honour with a lifelong pension. He received the certificate of Honour from the President of India in 1959, became a member of Committee for selecting young artists for scholarship in Manipur dancing, a member of the Bhartiya Sanskrit Sangam, Presidentship of Manipur Sahitya Parisad in 1960. In 1963 the Central Sangeet-Natak Academe of India in New Delhi gave the award in 1963 for Manipuri dance posthumously. All these distinctions were the result of his sweat and toil.

He has written about 100 books in Manipuri, Sanskrit, Bengali, Hindi and English and 6 more books in Manipuri, English and Bengali are in manuscript form. Among the books written and published by him mention can be made of his magnum opus **'Saraswata Vyakaran'**, Shrimad Bhagavat Purana (in ten editions). He also edited texts written by Pandits in Archaic Meitei scripts like Cheitharol Kumbaba Part I and II, **Meitei Sidabung,** etc. He was a queer combination of Sanskrit and Meitei Scholarship. It would be difficult to say which element Vedic Sanskrit or ancient Meiteilogy was the stronger element in my observation-Popularisation of Hindu Shastras or synthesis of Hinduism and ancient Meiteilore. He collected many *Puyas*/sacred lores written in Meitei script

for respectful study along with several Hindu branches of learning. He made no distinction between the Brahmans and Meiteis, married Bhagyabati Devi, a Meitei kshatriyani. His interpretation of **trikatsa** (dress for a Kirtan singer) and Manipuri Rasa dress made them world famous as a shining symbol of Meitei culture. In matter of his diet he was a very good-eater of curry prepared with **yensin** (sorrel, edible grass) and Ngamu fish and brinjal vaji and Manipuri Vaishnava diet comprised his meals.

As an official and Head astrologer of H.H. Maharaja Churachand Singh he did what other orientalists carried out in Bengal, Maharastra and south Indian states. His printing and interpretation of Hindu texts, translation of Vyakaran, literature, Sangeet, Jyotish, Smriti and the Gita texts, their wide circulation are remarkable. He had studied Max Muller's edition of 4 vedas and commentaries. He had also written a voluminous History of Manipur from the astronomical and philological point of view. He wrote a small book on Manipuri culture and astrology which was translated into English by late A. Dorendro Singh, Kavi Ratna and revised by Mr. Higgins, ICS, P.A. The book was read by eminent scholars of Assam, Bengal and European states. His patron and benefactor the Maharaja allowed to start his private press Churachand Printing works which embolden him the effort of printing his research works and of starting journals. He was a tireless worker acting as an inspired soul under divine guidance for Indological research.

His judgements sound strange and he dared to express them in his series of volumes. Manipur was the second Vaikuntha, the home of human culture and civilisation and culture, developed theory of **Pratnamkas** or the Ancient Homeland of the Aryan people in Manipur. The Meiteis are coming from the word Mithila, are but the branch of Aryans coming from Mithila. Sanatanic Hindu life has confined in Manipur in the original form without any foreign interference. He identified many Meitei deities with Hindu Vedic and Puranic names on philological grounds. He gave Hindu versions of the origin of many stories and legends. His stand with regard to many texts was with regard to his new approach. He differed widely from the Anthropologists, historians and western scholars and critics who regarded the Meiteis as a section of Kuki chin group or Chinese stock or Nagas. It is his bold theory that distinguished his approach from those of others.

His dream of having Manipuri translation of Shri Bhagavat in all Khandas with accent on his commentary must be considered his only unfulfilled desire.

Apart from being a writer of many books he is the pioneer journalist using vernacular medium for its purpose. When Indian National movement and Manipur's future states became critical he jointed Indian National Congress and he dedicated his Mandap and the press to the Congress after leaving the service as teacher of Johnstone High School. He was responsible for bringing out the **Dainik Manipur**, 1st daily paper, **Lalita**

Manjuri Patrika (a monthly literary and cultural paper), the Manipuri Panchanga (1933), another daily namely Bhagavati Patrika in memory of his life, Bhagyavati Masika (culture and literature), Bhagya Lalita kala on music, dance etc. The publication of Dainik Manipur angered the British Government and the Political Agent banned its publication in the history of Manipuri press and journalism for the first time. About 5 Manipuri Daily papers and 2 weekly papers and 1 monthly magazine were published form his press.

His work is not confined to journalistic works. He found time to set up the following institutions;

Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha (with the support of the Maharaja),

Manipuri Sangita Rakshini Sabha, Manipuri Historical Research Society, Sanga-veda-Ashrama, His interpretation of Meitei Kirtan and Ras which appeared in his books and quoted by many dance critics roused the attention of several artists like Nirmala Joshi, Savita Mehta and Javeri sisters of Bombay Maharastra.

He had a number of disciples, and followers who became famous later on as Sanskrit scholars, gurus of dance/music, astrologers. Well known astrologers like L. Gandhar Singh, Th. Suro Singh, Chandra Siddhanta of the royal court, noted dance guru Amubi Singh, Ojha Atoyaima Singh, Madhop Pandit, ostad Thambou Singh, became well known as great ojhas/pandits throughout Manipur for their works. They were his students and junior colleagues who sought advice from him. As per the usage many Manipuris used to receive initiation into Vaishnava practices under respected Brahmans like him. He also went to Cachar in 1938 and initiated many low caste section of the people into Hindusim by his **disksha mantra.** To his people and students he was a Raj Pandit well versed in Jyotish, veda and shastras, experts in the recital of Gita, gopal Sahasanam, chandi and Gajendro Moksha. He used to prepare horoscopes and predicted that they will have bright careers by his calculations.

He was a deeply religious person and was very much attached to his family deity, Salagarma, Radha, Krishna, flanked by Nityananda, Saraswati Gadadhara and Chaitanya. He would be punctual in observing pujas in his family. He jointly worshipped Nongpok Ningthou and Panthoibi (identified with Siva and Uma) in dally images in his temple. His personal devotion was built upon his vedantic thesis of the Bengal Vaishnava type as found in Manipur.

It is said that Koijam Akiljit, a **lakpa** (S.D.O.) of the then Manipur wanted to install some vaishnava duties in Radhakunja. He retired form service on health ground and purchased a plot of land. With Pandit Raja's help he installed metal image of Shri Radha Vraja-vinod, wooden image of Krishna Caitanya and Neityai after bringing them from Manipur in 1945. He set up Vraja Vinod Kunja which is to the west of Purana Kunja of Shri Lokanath Goswami. Pandit Raj Atombapu stayed here for 2 full months

writing his famous book 'Manipur Sanatan Dharma' in Hindi language after the demise of H.H. Maharaja Churachand of Manipur.

One day when Sharmaji was engaged in writing his book in a secluded room he had a vision of a lady (up to the khubom/up to the flesh part in the calf). Later he got up and asked the lady of the Kunja about the presence of the mysterious lady. As she was away by that time she could not say anything. Panditji at last concluded that the lady was no other than Radharani who came to bless him mysteriously. He further advised the Sabaits not to put dirty things so that the spiritual atmosphere of that area may not be defiledly impure things.

Once he abused a Brahman Brajavasi for tasting kshira before offering to the deity. The Brajabasi advanced arguments like Sabari of the Ramayana. Panditji humbly apologised his remark and did pranam by offering one dhoti and the sum of Rs. 10/-. True to the family tradition he used to offer some dakshina and clothes to the Brajamai who dedicated her life to the sadhana in Radhakunda.

Panditji had some trouble in diabetic cases and died on 2-9-1964 leaving behind his family members-2 sons, 3 daughters and their children.

If we have any regard for his theories, works and researches, let us strive to bring into reality the scholarship of Indological studies by our efforts. It will be unrealistic to estimate the value of his work without any training. His books, pamphlets and theories and printing at cheap rates have made him immortal. They will proclaim to the readers his love for Manipuri culture, his respect for the pre-vaishnavite Meitei deities, integration of Meitei faith with that of Hindu India and the hard effort that had gone into their publication in wonderful manners. He boldly told his followers not to cremate his body according to vedic rites but to bury him as he did not complete the translation of the Bhagavata Purana into Manipuri. He further informed them that his ashes was to be immersed in the holy Barak river at its source in Mao sub-division of Manipur. The tribals living on the bank of river Barak do not take boar curiously enough. He proclaimed that one can get salvation by worshipping Krishna/Salagram by uttering Manipuri words. The writer wondered as to how the Panditji, being an orthodox aristocratic Brahman would develop such remarks in a challenging manner. He was famous as an exponent of Sanskirtan, Rasa, Polo, etc.

Some Anthropologists/critical scholars considered him to be another Shantidas Gossai, the Ramanandi missionary of Sylhet. His success was not only the deep astrological astronomical knowledge and meitei system of Jyotish but the synthetic, integrative outlook. A great tribute to him as propagator of Aryan culture in Eastern India, i.e. Rishi Ayastya was given by National Professor Dr Suniti Kumar Chattarjee who observed : "In the work of Indian Integration, Panditraj Phurailatpam Atombapu Sarma, Vidya Ratna, Guveshana Shiromani, was a great scholar of Sanskrit, of Brahmanical philosophy as well as the Brahman way of life, and this he combined with the fullest understanding and appreciation of the Meithei

background in culture and folklore and religious ideologies ..... His work in the religious-cultural domain even in the present age would easily recall the services like those rendered, e.g., by Agastya in South India."

Pandit M. Chandra Singh, S/o Pandit Moirang Thabal

Pandit Achouba M. Chandra Singh 9th March, (b) 1895/1815 Sakabda-18th June, (d) 1976 son of Pandit M. Thabal Singh obey Pandit of the palace was one of the scientific Indologists of Manipur, very closely associated with the Maharajas of Manipur-Churachand and Bodhachandra. He played a significant part in the spread of Manipuri script, ancient *Puyas* with scientific interpretations after post independent decades, establishment and building up of historical research body "Manipur Bibodha Janani Sabha, Manipuri Gour Dharma Mahusbha, Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, different literary organisations (Sahitya Sabha, All Manipur Laiharaoba committee Meitei Mayek Organising Committee, Singjamei Natya, Saba Samitee, Brahamapur Kala Kendra, Govindaji Temple board) etc. he was also instrumental in the setting up of Maharaja Bodhachandra college, Hindi High School, of these institutions his aria, Eastern Girls High School, Ideal Girls College, Manipur College, etc. and served in the capacity of President and member of the Executive Committee.

In his personal and public life he also functioned as the teacher of Ram Lal Paul High School, Canchipur Poly Techenic High School, Pana Pandit of Palace Loisang (1941), Khabam Pana Lakpa of Manung Cheirakp (1942), Pandit Schouba Head Scholar of the Palace (1956), a member of the Advisory Council of the Chief Commissioner (during the Himmsat Chief Commissioner ship), a Research scholar of Jawaharlal Nehru Dance Academy (Editor of such Manipuri old texts as Panthoibi Khongul, Samjok Ngamba, Khahi Ngamba, Gambhir Singh Nongaba, Sija Samjamani, Poireiton Khunthok, etc., author of some more books and a regular contributor of research articles to Journals, papers in Manipuri, young research scholars had the inspiration and benefaction of this Pandit. He was one finest specimen of critical and comparative scholarships.

As a journalist and author, he had been prolific and his writing had the impression of his scholarship and mature reflections. He had knowledge of English and modern Education (being a Matriculate from Shillong, Govt. High School under Calcutta University), Sanskrit, Bengali, etc. in addition to his training in archaic script and language and sacred lore on the advice of his father. He has his training under some Pandits : his own father, N. Amukhomba, Longjam Gopal, Angangjao etc. The post of a Head pahoit occempad by his father M.Thabal Singh assumed great importance during the rign of Maharaja Charachand He has his associations with the doyens of Pandit Loishang Ng. Chaoba Hanjaba, W. Tolen Henjaba, W. Yumjao Singh and the then Political Agent, Mr. Higgins, I.C.S. for years. He wrote the following books viz. Longi Pathap (grammar) Nongpok Panthoibi (1965), Meitei Mayak (1969), Chingoi Irupa (1970), Pebet, Chakparol (1971), Manipuri Muslim (1973), many introduction forwards which were

published by different publishers. More are in mss. form viz. Jila Darbar, Kakching Keiphamda Churachand, Jila Changba, Sagok, Sindhu Gaurab (trans), Nonga Lambi (trans). He went to Cachar, Hojai, Nowgong, Baluhander in c/w conferences on Manipuri culture and opening of branches of Manipur Sahitya Parisad. While young he visited holy shrines like Vrindavan where he met ex Maharaja Kulachandra Singh, Puri etc. and visited several hill tracts of Manipur. As a representative of Manipur he went to Hydrabad for a seminar on Manipuri dance. The Manipur Sahitya Parisad honoured him with the title-Sahitya Bhusan, Sahitya Ratna. Manipur State Kala Akademi elected him as the fellow for his outstanding works on old literature in 1974.

His presidential speeches of Manipuri Sahitya Parisad on *Puyas* like Panthoibi Kongkul, Cheitharol Kumbaba and Lai Haraoba, on such tribes as Lois, Muslims etc. reveal in-side. His edition of old texts are standard works of reference as are his explanations of rituals, particularly Khoi Mahum Shaba (building of nests by block bus.

He was an eye opener in the scientific research of *Puyas*. He has been writing in the Manipuri journals in his last days. The last of his articles titled about Poiretion raises many arguments in the papers. He made strong reaction to the copper plate of King Khongtekcha and origin of the Manipuri Muslims. He was the first scholar to deliver scholastic addresses on **Cheitharol Kumbaba** (Anglo-section chronicles of the Meiteis), **Ningthoural Lambuba** (Raj Tarangini) before the learned gathering. The discipline of his father and Sanskrit education were the influences on his life and works. In the words of Pope "Authors, like coins, grow dear as they grow on." It is the result we value not the gold."

He also believed that blending of the past and present, and scientific knowledge was necessary for a good person. In the light of Hahothorne's "Human nature will not flourish; any more than a potato if it is planted and re-planted for too long a series generations in the same worn out soil".

Equally worthy of our respect as the above pioneers in indological fields were late N. Dinachandra Pandit, late Th. Madhob Singh, late N. Amuyaima Singh, of the Konung/royal court of custom. Their edition of texts and interpretations familiarised us with our sacred lore.

Persons who had done yeoman's service afterwards in collecting meitei *Puyas*, editing them and publishing them in readable Bengali script were late R.K. Sanahal Singh, Late Kh. Yaima, N. Khelchandra Singh, late O. Bhogeswar, Ng. Kulachandra Singh, I. Amubi and the author himself.

Glimpses into Manipuri Indology cannot be complete without drawing one's attention to the author's association with BORI, Poona and sessions of All India Oriental Conference, participation in the 5th and 10th World Sanskrit Conference in Banarasi, 1980 and Banglaore, 1997. The author is the only person in this part of India having connection with All India Oriental Conference in the capacity of Council Member with voting right and with International Vedic Education Foundation, New Zersi, U.S.A. The

author made a large collection of Meitei mss printing and published in Bengali script since 1956. Some almirahs are earmarked for keeping Sanskrit and Bengali scripture and mss concerning Vaishnava theology, rituals, astrology, literature, music and grammar left behind by his late father M. Borajao Singh, the noted Vashnava rector of texts and translator and Meitei physician and late Konsam Chaoba Singh (the author's grand father on the maternal side), the noted **Lairik Haiba** (expounder of the holy scripture). There is also author's collection of printed summaries, proceedings of All India Oriental Conferences and International congress of Orientalist, New Delhi Session. The author has personal contact with Indian scholars and collected books laboriously from the noted Meiteis Pandits, astrologers and physicians. The author wrote 24 books in English and Manipuri (8 books in English and 16 in Manipuri). All of them are valuable reference books in every research work. Out of them 2 are Meite Texts with introduction edited by the author for promoting Manipuri works of old literature's among the masses. The books by the author in English and Manipuri contain many critical aspects on society, culture, religion and journalism from cultural milieu. They have been most important works used to guide the researchers. But for these papers only indological books edited by me are high lighted here. The author has acquired some Meitei mss out of which he selected two books i.e. **Apok Satlamlel** and **Khununolol Ariba. Apok Satlamlel** (1995-96) is based on Meitei Leisemlol creation of the Universe by the decree of the most excellent Guru. Its entries cover not merely account of the origin of the universe, names and attitudes of Parisidaba, origin of the heavenly bodies, invention of agricultural instruments cultivation sowing and transplantation of the paddy, divisions of time fruits, insects, several clans and tribes. It also reflects the style of the author/writer of this manuscript with some Sanskrit words like Swaha, Kling, Hring, etc. It also discusses the evils of ecological imbalance and solutions made by the ancient Meiteis. It carries theories of different clans, tribes and people of different states outside Manipur. The language is readable and easy and as such no paraphrase is needed in my estimate. There are many issues as interest in Manipuri thought grows day by day. The words like K, t, p are used in places of g.d, b, etc., although one can understand it without any trouble. The unnamed author or this mss. goes the cultural belief down to the medieval Hindu tantric period with Sanskrit word and tantric hymns. He demolished the extreme theory that the Meiteis were without any scripture, any Indian impact on their beliefs and practices. None of the views have any iota of truth in them if we study this text minutely.

Another peculiar feature of the mss is that it contains a strong injunction of the reader/writer not to touch it during the period of his uncleanness. It also registers a strong protest against the copying and reading of the contents without proper bath, clean dress and puja. It recommends the virtures of reciting the text in clear terms as a means of salvation for a Meitei is this life and next birth.

Khunung Lol Ariba– (**Meitei Laining**) This mss which it like the Manipuri version of the **Gita** is named by the author, Khunung Lol Ariba (old language of the Meiteis) in consequence of its being sayings of Lai (deity), the treatise, on abstruse metaphysical and ethical concepts viz. **Laipak** (fate) **pap, Puinya**/vice, viture inner meanings of Sanamahi, Pakhangba and important deities of the Meiteis, state of good health, longevity, dreamless sleep respiration, Pujah to control bad omen, natural calamities, an healthy body free form any kind of trouble, illness, **Ushin** (offering based on law of transference), art of counting beads and Meitei **Sadhana.** Etymological meaning of **Mikap, Charon Suron** in terms of numbers, pung/hour names of addressing to-day to-morrow, etc. upto to 7th one in terms of air, heaven, water etc. **Houjik** (now/present) as the soul, meaning of **meitei, poirei/wana paiba** meaning to fly in a hazardous way to the place of Hari..... have been touched upon. This is an important nature which has influenced Manipur thinking of subsequent times. The scripture lays down the truth that this **Sadhana** is the sure means of bringing salvation both here and hereafter. There has thus grown up an elaborate science and literature in meiteilogy explaining the meaning and significance of the works, worship and yogic practices of the Meiteis.

Conclusion

1. To be a writer, scholar/pandit in the time of the Maharajas was socially honourable and economically remunerative. They served the country and the people in a way so that the State can march ahead along with other states of India. The approval of the ruling authority and the Kripa (grace) of Shri Govindaji/Lord of the Universe were pleasing to them. They were very humble in their manner.

2. The Indologists of Manipur are the great Indologists of India that Indian culture has produced. They gave us the message of integration and synthesis and high philosophy. Alas, the young generation has forgotten this and this gives rise to much turmoil and tension to-day.

3. The advance of Christianity in the valley areas and expansion of evangelising ministry to the Manipuri-Hindus had nothing to do with the advanced Meiteis who made their transactions in home and in many parts of sacred Bharat-Bharsa through pilgrimage, study of sacred scriptures and public support.

Success of Indological studies depends on increase in the number of innumerable gurus in music dance and specialists of Meitei myth and sacred lore. Some of them are not Meiteis by birth, Indeed such a small community contributed so many stalwards to be roll of honour. As a writer I have some selection to show how those few personalities took up issue of vital interest at a time when few Manipuris were conscious of printing, publication and producing Manipuri versions of epics we must honour them for their efforts. What Manipur stands at present is what during from their legacy and pursuits into critical periods of History.

Notes and References

1. The author got assignments to prepare notes on the life history of Pandit Atombapu Sharma, W. Yumjao Singh, etc. for some Encyclopaedia Volume. Some of them are lost and are written for this paper in 1995.
2. Vide the author's article in Atombapu Centenary Celebrations sovenior, edited by A. Somarendro Singh. The responsibility of revicing Rof E. Nito Kanta Singh book on Atombapa Sharma was information by me. according to the suggestion of Sahitya Academic Calcutta office.
3. Vide state Archives week celebration on 25/11/94 showing the exhibition of Shri Yumjaos' work. The state level function was presided over by the author.
4. R.K. Sanahal Singh (Ed) **H. Chaitanyagi Khomjinba Lairiksing,** Imphal, 1982.
5. The author made studies of the works of Angom Gopi, W. Madhobram and Khunbong Maniram. They are edited by scholars like R.K. Sanahal Singh, W. yumjao, etc. The united works consisting of so many parts and pages may not be the best edited but they were pioneer works for the state ever printed till this time.
6. A ms called **vyavastharnava** (code of Manipuri Vaishnavas) side to be stated by the Poreity since the time of Maharaja Bhagyachandra and finally improved and enlarged by order of Maharaja Chandrakirti is in the process of being edited and published by me in a project with such founding of every agency like regional Sahitya Academy, Calcutta.

21

REMEMBERING INDIAN CULTURAL AND OTHER ELEMENTS AS ASSIMILATED IN MANIPUR

(A) ATHARVA VEDIC CULTURE IN MANIPUR WITH REFERENCE TO OCCULTISM AND WITCHCRAFT

Remembering Indian and revivalist cultural Elements as assimilated in Manipur is fascinating. We highlight some aspect of Manipuri culture which were important since early things and whom we reinforce important on other Indian recast.

The prevailing atmosphere of **Atharva veda** is that of charms, spells and incantations against sorcerers. diseases, etc. Such beliefs are quite common among people of primitive culture throughout the world. This is evident from the primitive religion of all societies, viz., that of ancient Greece, Central Asia, Europe and different primitive tribes like those of the Teogus, Vrata and Yakut.

In the **Atharva veda Suktas** there are many hymns suggesting yogic practices, physiology, players for the Sun, **vac** (speech), earth, inhalation, exhalation, process of controlling the senses, posture, breath control and chanelising the people godward. Whatever these concepts are present in Atharva Veda is barest minimum and not in the highly developed form of classical philosophical thought of India. The duel belief in magic and religion also flourished in the time of Atharva.

Occultism is an inseparable part of Atharva Veda. It comprises things between Heaven and earth undreamed of in science and philosophy. As distinguished from science it believes in supercausation and that all calamities are caused by displeasure of gods and spirits in the world and surrounding human beings.

Types of occultism found in **Atharva Veda** such as healing, prosperity, desiring rain, victory in war, evil spirits to kill an enemy, to drive away evil spirits for safe delivery of child are in abundance. Such beliefs and concepts are of great interest both from the religious historical and Anthropological point of view of Manipur since methods of using spells dealing with supernatural forces which were at sometime in general use and in which there was a general belief.

A kind of cultural difference is beautifully noticed in **Atharvavada**. It was during this period that there is a change in the concept of god. God is subordinated to spells and witchcraft's, world culture cannot be fully understood unless the concept of mother earth with people as her children is fully appreciated. It has its impact on the poets and religious history of the

world. These concepts are popular and believed to be real which tells how Manipuri culture is also built on them.

We give below some of the feature of **Atharva Vedic** culture that are practised in Manipur.

1. A large number of Meitei hymns (laiwas in archaic Manipur) are for healing diseases with talisman, herbs and spells. The white **atharva** culture is practised with some success among the Meiteis. Literature on this practice was immense.

The Maibas/medicine man is supposed to be in league with spirits and to possess supernatural powers. By his power he can transfer diseases to some plants, trees, birds and to the sun, Like the **Atharva** practices various herbs etc., drugs were asked for charming, subduing the people. By feeling the pu'se of the patient or any pregnant woman the **maiba** can know the actual time of death or determine the sex of the child while yet in the womb. Methods for testing the character of the bride or a girl are adopted. One cans come across cases of **Yembum Huroichanba** (like the **Nirajana** ceremony-**Parisista** of **Agni purana** and **Brihat samhita**) are performed for the success of a king in his military expedition.

The possibility of achieving any goal/object by such practices, viz., mantras, talisman etc., is even proved by the Meiteis in this age of sceptics when educated and cultured people doubt all things primitive and supernatural. We have noticed that some of the details of **Atharva-vedic** rituals are similar to those of the Manipuris/Meiteis, viz., deprecation of the birth of a daughter, charm against sterility and for assuming the birth of male children protection of a pregnant woman from evil spirits, 2 kinds of marriage-the **Brahman** and the **Candarya,** attempt to win over a maiden by charms, incantations, marriage ritual, dowry, usual transfer of the newly-married girl from the father's home to her husbands, incantations for restoring concord between the couples, legal position of the wife, polygamy, remarriage of widow, cremation as the usual method of disposal of the dead, etc. The use of the word 'OM' as an essential part of a mantra, **Dampati** (as in the dual sense of a husband and wife), **Yajnas**, expiatory formula to avert the evil consequences of inauspicious doings, use of fire in the house, uncleanness of women at certain periods and the above similarity of rituals reflected as they are in the important phases of life-show the influence of **Atharvan** culture and Iranian belief on the Manipuris. We also know from the numerous references of the writings of Pandit Raj Atombapu Sharma that he was inclined to take the Meiteis as the **Vratyas** who uphold the **Atharva Veda** and gave it the highest place among the **Vedas.**

In support of his theory he also advanced certain distinct similarities between the practices of **Atharvan Veda** and Meitei practices, especially in Black Magic and sorcery. Both Àtombapu Sharma and Parsuram Pandit (of Sekmai, a scheduled caste by birth) firmly assert **Apoiba** concept of

Sanamahi and **Leimaral** prevalent among the Meiteis as described in the sacred medical literature is somewhat similar to the **Sven Yajna** of the **Atharva Veda.** Further research is needed to discuss whether this cult of **Apoiba** is a perversion of the original concept for purpose of witchcraft and sorcery when the Meitei people came in contact with the Athavic and tantric practitioners when their beliefs entered into their social problem. Though the belief in the existence of distinctive aspect of important deities since the creation of the cosmos and the Lord/**Mapu** (Almighty) permitted cases of beings known as **Laimang/Sharoi Ngaroi** (like the **ganas**/attendants), it is only in later periods we came scross considerable **apoiba** literature.

Sanamahi Apoiba (untamed) cult

It is learnt from the **Atharva Veda** that the Brahmans did not take the help of Kings when they suffered humiliation from the hands of **Asuras.** By taking royal help they might lose their nature and ascetic energy. Under such circumstances **"Syenanabhicharan Yajit"** they performed a sacrifice of **Syen** so that it should attack the enemy like the hawks attacking sparrow and other small birds. **Sven Devata** is terror personified like Nrisingh Deva who brought about the destruction of the wrong doers. Sanamahi, the presiding deity of every Meithei house occupies the position **Sven Devata** of **Atharva Veda** does in Manipur. Even now all sections of people high and low are obliged to honour this ruling deity. A perversion of Sanamahi cult for purposes of sorcery and witchcraft is known as **Apoiba** cult which means that **Sanamahi** is a nomadic deity without any permanent house.

The wild/untamed Sanamahi aspect is a regional expression of **Sven vag** of Vedic India with slight differences. It is one of the characteristics of Aryan impact in Manipur. This practice is not to be confused with the superstition of the uncivilised group as it is continued to be practised to reflect the social relations e.g., to let loose the deity to help approach the authorities or placate a judge or defeating an opposite party or to seek legal protection for sorcery among the higher section of the orthodox section of Hindus. In the cult of Hanuman among the people in Western parts of India, we find the practice similar in nature to that of **Sanamahi Apoiba** of Manipur.

The stone emblem (like the salagram) is kept by every **piba** chief of the surname). This disc-like coin is covered by pieces of cloth and kept in the basket for annual worship on the new year's day of the Meiteis. This **Cheiraoba** (new year) festival is despised as a worship of a piece of cloth not only by T.C. Hodson, the Anthropologist but by the Vaisnava intoxicated Manipuris as well. The mental attitude of this criticism is that what they cannot understand and observed minutely is thought to be a pagan belief. Here in this rite, the Meiteis offer **upasana** of the image of **Sven Devata** to alleviate the sufferings or misfortunes of the people.

Process of sending Sanamahi Apoiba

The Meitei **Maibas** (physicians) possessed the secret of summoning and sending out untamed Sanamahi and calling upon the same to possess someone to defeat strong enemies and create a frightened state in the mind of the opponent who may constantly offer for a compromise and cause domestic crises to the enemy in cases of long suits and constant enmity. The **Maiba** utters the mantra with the offering of fruit, flowers, pan, etc. to the icon of Sanamahi. The Sanamahi of the house will become wild and allow an **apoiba**/untamed Sanamahi easy entry to the house or will become wild himself subject to the charm of the **maiba**/physician. He should leave his protective work and leave it unprotected. The icon representing Sanamahi is secretly buried in the compound or corner of the enemy's house. Then, calamity, misfortune and other crises will visit the family of the enemy. The family upon whom the misfortune occurred, will realise that **Apoiba**/untamed Sanamahi has been sent forward by the enemy. Then he must request once again his household deity Sanamahi to protect the family against calamity, feuds and pernicious influences through **Thouniba** rite under the supervision of ritual experts. Its effect is also quick and marvellous.

There are some superstitious beliefs connected with the **apoiba** aspects of Sanamahi and his mother goddess **Laimeral** (Earth goddess). If one sleeps before the apoiba symbol (coin) unwittingly death is the outcome. If one changes clothes before it illness will follow and so on. If a woman in her menstrual period happened to pass before the **Sanamahi Kachin** (place in the South-West corner of every dwelling house for the abode of this deity) the lai is displeased by becoming **Apoiba.** There are definite rules for observing the **Puja** and for wearing sacred cloth and talisman. Slight violation of rules for observance might affect the potency.

Notes and References

1. Atombapu Sarma, **Manipur Itihas,** Imphal, 1936, Section on Sanamahi deity.
2. Information supplied by noted physicians/medicine men viz., Parsuram Pandit of Sekmai, R. Brajamohan Sharma, etc.
3. Govinda Singh, **Atharva Veda** (Hindi), Delhi, 1989, pp.
4. Prof. Griffith (English Translation), **Atharya Veda,** (some portions on witchcraft)

B. Ariba Pala Sankritana

Ariba Sankritana otherwise known as **Bangdesh Pala** is a devotional performance by some male singers along with 2 mridanga players where songs from the **lila** of Caitanya and Vaisnava padavalis were song with the 7 syllables Rama Krisna Govinda in the Raga. Schools of Bengal Vaisnavism and Ramanandi entered Manipur between the reign of Maharaja Charairongba (1698-1709) and Maharaja Garibniwaz (1709-

1749) along with the preachers and musician. **Bangdesh** (old Kritana) is derived from a Kritana teacher of **Bangdesh** about whom there was a tradition regarding his composition and merger with the **Konthoujam** surname of Meiteis.

In its performance there is no **Chalan Gathan,** no **Sastric** display of dance, tuning, drum beating and none of its features exhibits Manipuri approved practices which revealed the mystic import of later (new) **Nat Kritan** evolved by order of Maharaja Bhagya chandra.

We find evidence in its tuning from old Meitei texts such as **Naherol, Sikaplon, Hikaplon, Hiri Pabot, Hiri Thangyei,** etc. According to Scholars it had some connection with the Ojhapali music of Assam. The participants were costumed in dhoti, yellow turban with a black thread, and a kind of old wrapper as a waist band. As different from the musical instruments of new Kritana it consists of a **mridanga** with large ends and cymbals with a big face and a short tail.

Another name for it is **Sevak Pala**, called after the followers of Konthou Ojha. The people of Thoubal Athokpam (a village to the south of Imphal) had made important contributions to its tradition through composition of songs from memory and regular performance during the 7 years' devastation of Manipur (1819-1825 A.D.) by the Burmese. Its performance was made in connection with the worship of Ramji Prabhu and Shri Govindaji.

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2. Sarma, Atombapu, Meitei Kirtan Imphal 1953. List of works consulted in preparing the article.

1. Singh, Kh. Ateyaima, "Meitei Kirtangi Itihas" included in **Bhasanshing Khomjinba,** Imphal 1954.

2. Papers presented in the Seminar on Bangdesh Pala organised by Manipur State Kala Academy, Imphal, from 11.1.74 to 12.1.74.

(C) Apoka Movement

A reform movement in the middle of the 20th Century that rejects Hindu Brahmanic practices which gained popularity under the Manipuri rulers. As a protest movement it was initiated by Naoriya Phule of Cachar (Assam). T. Bokul, Surchand, Ibomcha and some followers of Phule popularised it under the name of Meitei in different parts of Manipur.

Dissatisfied with sanskritisation of Meitei society, the adoption of Bengali script and other reactionary methods of the Brahman Sabha of the princely regime they revived the pure Meitei ideas in modern contexts. There were many substantial volumes of books from Phulo and bokul showing how argumentative and how it appeals to the people on the concept of **Poklel Pekpa** (Sole breeder of that is bred) and Meitei ethnic identity. Bokul summed up the results of psychological and philosophical interpretations of this faith in his commentaries and publications.

It faced violent opposition from the Maharaja on account of its revolutionary implications concerning the origin of the Meiteis and identification of present Manipur with that of Hindu epics. Its popularity can however be judged from its increasing number of followers, inspiration to singers, priests and story tellers by Phulo's compositions and homage to this cult on the occasion of first century celebration of Phulo in 1988.

(D) Tantrik Cult in Manipur

A place for abundance of magic, fertility rites and cult of gods and goddesses, stories illustrating tantric influence are those of Kabui kayoiba, Sanrembi Chaisra, cults of deities and gurus where we find change of forms through spells. The cult by charms, black magic, treatment of disease is very powerful till to-day. Kangla (the nerve point) is a spectacular example of preponderance of tantrism about human, animal sacrifice and community rituals.

Local belief has created a cult of itself around such concept as **Augri** (destructive singing), **paphal** (diagrammatic representation of the snake god). **Anji** (variant of Om), **Hung** root letter-**Ha, Ra, Sa** and symbolic representation of 5 elements. **Paphal** is the property enjoying national symbol till the merger of Manipur with India (1949). Vast literature exists and throws light on the Physiological and medicinal principles of Hinduism and Buddhism. We come across **maibas** (Physicians) who recite charms for the cure of not only those who are bitten by poisonous animals but also of those possessed by evil spirits and **Hingchabi** (Vampire). It was used by the Meiteis in order to influence the course of love affairs and contest of war. The specialists invoke the aid of **Kali, Yogi, Dakini** and **Heloi** (nymph) through use of charms and **Kavacha** (talisman). Its method of attaining supernatural powers and by draheaded practice was the craze and inspiration of kings, warriors and nobles for several centuries. Instances were on record that persons well versed in witchcraft and could not tread the path with caution were severely dealt with by Vaisnava society.

N.B. (The tantric outlook associated with Bengali Saktism, Bankim's **Vande Matram**, universal teaching of Ramkrishna and integral philosophy of Aurobindo have also enriched Manipuri thought and culture).

(E) Puranic Tantrik Tradition in Manipuri Culture

Manipuri Culture bears distinct traits of Hindu and Buddhist tantrism all through history. Its early cultural life was full of non-Brahmanical types (no celibacy, meat eating, etc.) although many groups and tribes confederated themselves into a single uniformity. Its close ties with Kamakhya (Assam) and tihatta (Bangladesh) made it an insignia of divergent streams.

On the basis of inscriptional and literary evidence we conclude that by the 2nd Century A.D. (or 8th century) tantrism had gained predominance. The cult of **Gurus** in Manipuri thought shows impact of Buddhist tantrism along with Saivism and Saktism. The place goes by the name of **Manipur**

(naval) or **Mekhele** which is connected with the waist of Devi supposed to have fallen according to Puranic literature. The vast tantric literature discusses in details about charms, application of rites, worship of innumerable duties, etc. They were composed by the mortal **gurus, maichous** and series of court pandits and physicians during their inspired moments. The tradition goes that they took human birth to restructure Meitei religion through their miraculous feats and crusade against the evils of uninformed practices.

The prevalence of shrinces such as Kangla, Hiyangthang, Kalimai Policelane and various forms of female divinities such as Panthoibi, Phaoibi, Kalimai, Durga with the temples in abundance added a new aroma into the tantric tradition. Manipuri Vaisnavism is also a variety in character in view of its emphasis on the role of Radha, **seed mantra** and the place of a **Diksa guru** at the time of initiation.

(F) Philosophy of Lai-Haraoba

Lai-Haraoba (merry making of gods) is a yearly religious obligation of every **Meitei** village under the guidance of priests and priestesses in honour of **Umanglai** forest deities of grove) in **Kalel** (April-May). The population of the village is divided into different sections under the customary practice for purposes of participation. It is described as animism with beliefs in fertility rites, taboos, and eroticism. In spite of several theories regarding its origin and practice it is to be noted as the store house of Meitei culture and civilisation. Every people has accepted it as a record as venerable as the Gita for developments of its ideas in different directions.

Lai-Haraoba has several kinds and has undergone changes mainly due to social and cultural ideas arising from the influence of Hinduism. This festival is not only of community welfare but also of salvation/god realisation. The people have taken special care of its sections, dance items, puja materials (pot, bunches of **langthrei** leaves, bells, cotton thread, use of clean fire, particles of gold and silver., etc.) since they are connected with metaphysical and cultural points of view.

In **Meitei** belief god is supposed to be in a state of quiescence in ordinary times and is activised through enticing. God is made more capable of helping the worshipper through this ritual. Its philosophy has no conflict with main trends of philosophy. **Augri** (charm and dance movement) various songs and offerings, etc. are interpreted from the tantric point of view. It is one with the **Veda** in believing in a central deity who is praised above all in prayers; monism with a blend of henotheism. Evil spirits are enemies of god and human. To effect the alliance between god and men is a basic feature of **Haraoba** which is in spirit much like the contimpory humanism.

(G) The Manipuri Version the Gita

Not only the Hindu scripture per excellence, but it is the book of Universal wisdom, a version of perennial philosophy. One of the cardinal

scripture constituting triple text, of Vedanta, a living religion of the Hindus. Its popularity is proved by the numerous translation various in divers language by eminent scholars of the east and west, commentaries by aharyas and contemporary writers for modern times. It played a major role in the lives of national leaders like Gandhiji, Vivekananda, Tilak and Vinobaji. It is an inspiration to them to act on the political plane.

Its teachings such as supreme reality, theory of incarnations, disinterested performance of action, balanced state of mind, comprehensive/Catholic, ideal of true religion without arbitrariness, Arjuna's despondency and Krishna's rebuking him with suggestion are remedies of to-day's problem. It teaches us to live wisely without flying to mountain tops and monasteries. Its words carry a deep concern for humanity, a genuine moral earnestness and a caplivating poetic power. This Gita was originally written in Bengali by one Govinda Mishra and translated into Manipuri by O. Prajnananda. It is to be noted that is was a popular Manipuri version of the 17th century organised with Govidra Mishra. It is a devotional Gita with stories from Bhagavata. We have to establish the identity of Govinda Mishra. The Manipuri Gita as found to-day is of use for the standby of Bengal Varishavim in Manipur.

By O Prajananda (1810 A.D.) The Manipuri version of the Gita is an addition to the extant Gita literature. Its approach is from a new standpoint in so far as the author cites materials, philosophical terms from the **Bhagavata, Puranas, Tantras** and Bengal Vaishnava texts. It is not a poem as we find it in main editions and commentaries. The form of discourse given by Krishna to Arjuna in chapter 3-10 of the Manipuri version corresponds to the original Gita. Stories of popular Hinduism like the churning of Ocean, activities of Shri Krishna and several other divinities, tantric conception of physiology, psychology, etc. are set forth in other chapters in a most ancient manner.

The language is pregnant with philosophical and religious meaning, The Manipuri Gita has the freshness of the late medieval spoken language. Its apt similes, metaphors and epigrammatic forms have gone into the making of Meitei literature of the late medieval period. The message is couched in a language which, when read over and over again becomes part of the mental content of the Manipuri Vaishnavas.

The Manipuri version attempts to break a new background so far as the doctrines of is creation, concept of maya, prakriti, enumeration of 24 tatwas (3 gunas, 6 seasons, 7 days, and 8 kinds of prakriti).

They differ from other ahtrator commentary on the meaning of here twin the doctrine, of incarnation and beiswarup Dorshas are also quite original in Mirtri version.

Observations the maring of 3 years, sathva fast in the same of gandtion truth, fulfilment of ones duty whiny it is not writerorus, purance passages, tentric and local Manipuri blifs are significant and dyerves, servian

research. The turn Sthitaprajna is written as Dharij ta prajna. (order man) in Mahagita.

Conclusion

I now conclude this paper with the following observations– (i) There have been discussions as to what racial stock the Meiteis (into which I was born) belong to. The British writers have put forth the theory that they belong to Tartar or Chinese with racial characteristic close to those of kukichins and Mongoloids. This supposition is based upon anthropological studies.

More common, however is the view that they were of Indo Aryan descent and the rulers were the descendants of Arjuna. Support for this view is found in those of Hindu Missionaries and traditions and customs of the people extremely wide spread during the 18th and 19th centuries. Again further complications are introduced by the fact that the Meitei secured *Puyas* compiled by the court Pandits speak of them as being descended from the mythological ancestors/ruling deities. so they claim that Manipur was their original land.

It cannot be challenged that in the ways of thinking associated with Hindu Vaisnavisam, Shaivism, Tantrisam etc. there are features that strongly suggest with the Indo Aryan people and their culture. However the fertile brain of the people and the elements of Mongoloid culture from Myanmar and China cannot be wholly ruled out. Whatever be the theories there is no doubt that Manipuri culture as expressed in Kirtan, Laiharaoba medical lore, black magic, grew up mainly within the Indian cultural sphere.

More than 70% of Manipuri culture is contributed by Indian elements. On the model of Indian mode of worship and system of writing texts some practices were developed in the worship of Meitei and Hindu deity in Manipur. The sources of these elements are to be scrutinised exposed and examined by all of us. An attempt is made to present the interpretation and philosophical views of the above aspects as reflected in these themes. We must have respect for Indian philosophical theories and concepts classical and modern and as such the revivalist schools always allude to the views of the Gita Yoga, and Vedas to support them.

Being a teacher of Indian fought the author holds that Indian philosophy and religion(aside the evil practices and priest crafts) had a great impact on the people of the east and west alliance, and they have a good deal towards teaching peace and harmony. Meitei thought has to be studies in the context of Indian philosophy and work philosophy as a whole.

3. Manipur is known as the navel of the world, the fighting place in world war II and as the seat of old civilisation in sports and arts (they excel others). It was untouched by Muslim influence in the past. British influence is felt in its elements since the biginning of nineties and World War II. The

various elements and interest of different communities were brought under Manipuri nationalism by the rulers before its merger with Indian Union in 1949. It is inhabited by the Salais, **Nongpok Harams Nongchup Harams** (people from the east and west), Nagas and Kukis, Brahmans and Kshatriyas of Indian origin.

To the British and Japanese Manipur's importance lies in the fact that many of these nations died here during world war II. These people visited Manipur as Tiṛtha to pay homage to their departed ancestors and run cemetories and institutions at their expenses for retaining their love and regard.

The present tussle and clashes on account of ethnic problems caused a tough time for us for peace and harmony. We should move tactfully among us as our brothers and sisters of the same country.

Notes and References (Concerning C, D, E, F And G.)

1. Vide Dr. M. Kirti Singh, **Religion and Culture of Manipur**, Delhi, 1986, Chapter III (Socio-Religious Movements in the 20th Century).
2. Dr. M.Kirti Singh, **Religious Developments in Manipur in the 18th and 19th Centuries,** Imphal, 1980, Chapter VIII, pp 281-300.
3. Pandit M. Chandra Singh's Foreword to **Lai Haraoba** by Pandit g. Kulachandra Singh, Imphal 1963. I have developed these points of Laiharaoba as the Foundation of Manipuri culture and civilisation in my writings and addresses.
4. Dr. M.Kirti Singh, **Religious Development in Manipur in the 18th and 19th Centuries,** pp 189-190; 305-320.
5. The philosophical Basis of Manipuri thought (Pre-Vaishnaba and Vaishnava times) was attempted and estimated by me in my research papers, books and lectures among other methods of the research.

22

YOUTH INVOLVEMENT FOR EMOTIONAL AND CULTURAL INTEGRATION OF INDIA

The concept of National Integration is a burning problem in post Independent India. The Ideal has been analysed and discussed with acumen and insight by all concerned from the standpoint of Religion, Culture, Emotion, Economics, History, Sociology, etc. The paper is an attempt to discuss Role of Youths in emotional and cultural integration. As such the scope would not allow me to elaborate my observation on other aspects any further than I have done in this paper. I am trying to make some suggestions about what, in my opinion, really does count as youth participation in the country's integration.

The concept of Emotional Integration

Emotions are one of the most important structures of human mind. Their importance has been correctly assessed. Plato and Aristotle recognised the existence of vegetative and non-rational elements in a man's soul although they emphasize too much on cognitive side and rational contemplation. Ricardo and Hegel assigned dominant roles to the concept of reason. The important role of emotions have been revealed by the advances of modern social Psychology and Anthropology in individual and social life. Non cognitive aspect of man's life has attracted the attention of Mc Dougall, Durkheim, cooley, Thomas, and Hayes. The abstract scheme of theoretical rationalizaion for calculating a man's motivation and the formulation of a corresponding scheme of action is no longer accepted with authority. But the ancient Hindu Psychologists had a clear idea of emotional significance as indicated by the concept of Eshana, Bhava, Vasana, etc.

In modern philosophy Descartes and Spinoza conceived emotions as obscure and inadequate ideas. James Lange theory of emotion which says that Emotions is organic sensation due to expression or the effect of its expression is not tenable. Mc Dougall conception of emotion as an integral part of instinct is not correct as it deprives instinct of its distinctive role. We cannot accept the existence of rigid and inherent instinct in man. In Freud's opinion emotion represents dramatic re-living of earlier experiences. His merit lies in stressing a social element in the earlier experiences of man. Man's Psychical life if indivisible and there is no particular faculty which is specifically called emotion. Still it is known that emotions grow in the child earlier than reason. It refers to the affectional side of life.

Emotions are expressed in external acts. Sometimes, they are expressed in physical acts. Sometimes they can be expressed through symbols, e.g., language, art, religion, mythology, painting, etc.

The problem of emotional integration cannot be thought in abstraction. It has to be considered as a variable and its complex operations have to be discussed in the context of inter dependence of multiple social factors. The problems are to be approached from the individual and the social levels. Individuals are not to be considered apart from Society. Society consists of individuals as members.

Certain dominant drives or residues or wishes are fill among certain number of individuals and they are expressed at the social level. Emotions have their loci/habitation in the minds of individuals as well as in social situational field. There is always the process of clash and interpretation and reciprocal moulding between the objectives forces and the environment in one side and the emotional response of human beings as the other . The stimuli to the expression is provided by the environment which the cumulative action of emotion may at times change the environment.

Integration is necessary for the emotional stability of man. Disintegration is caused by several factors which required a conscious process of re-education. This problem was there in all societies and civilisations viz. France after the Franco-Russian war of 1870. India is full of such contradictions. The origin of these can be traced to clashes of interests between the centre and states, between labour and capital, poverty unemployment. In addition to these, we have such problems as, medium of instruction, University education, Indicipline, River valley schemes, common script, boundary dispute, communalism, intolerance, caste system, Regional language, absence of Uniform of civil code and microlevel studies of a group, and ethnic movements. The terrific clash between the accidental civilisation based on Industry and Science and Indian culture based on social discipline is a serious one. Disintegration is connected with these problems which divide the individuals and groups. These are created partly by external forces and partly by internal factors of which the feeling of insecurity individual mind is primary. The indivisual feel insecure in social life out of fear, suspicion, mistrust and killings and ultimately such individuals combine themselves for personal security into groups. The mutual hatred and fear of one group against another depends on local conditions but gradually the feelings spread like fire into the mind of weak and young persons. These individuals and groups combine themselves into a community for mutual security and ultimately communal jealousy bred discord having the urge for the individual for better privileges as security for them as a whole.

Integration means unification of elements that were formerly constituents of an organic whole or have all along existed separately. Its essential pre-condition in either case is a latent urge in the individual units for coming together as in its absence, force or presentation cannot bring about real unity. Oil and water, e.g. cannot be compounded because there have been no innate urge for merger. This is the case with human society and physical world. The only difference being that is physical world the

impulse of attractions is ingrained in the elements as parts of their entity while in society the attitude is relevant.

Against unity in diversity the types of integration calls for clarification. There is urge for the same but to what extent. We must be clear what sort of integration we visualise. Otherwise, the campaign will continue to be looked upon as it is done now, as a make believe organised out of political motive to provide paying jobs to some people politically helpful to some powerful political organisation.

(ii) Cultural Foundation of Emotional Integration

Obsessed with the achievements of the West the educated section of India attempted to create India a replica of U.S.A. or Britain. At the same time they cannot transcend the roots and tradition and old values of spiritual culture. Indian concepts and categories are in the minds of the educated Indians and reformers battling with the ideals, ways of action and patterns of western society. There has not been a corresponding development between scientific ingenuity and moral growth. The present society imposes certain repression's and taboos over the individuals and thereby creating neurosis. The emotional integration of different groups is disturbed by newspapers and irresponsible press through their propaganda. There are areas/sectors where careful politicians manipulated the perturbations and drew public attention to scapegoats. This was the case in Germany before world war II. In the opinion of Freud, sympathy and identification was easy under normal condition of peace. During years of stress and economic stress, e.g. a process of desublimation occurs and therefore trend towards self assertion and withdrawal of indentification with fellow beings are at want. Insecurity and lack of opportunity exercises negative influences in their mind.

In this context we can point out the Manipuri youths are second to none in their sense of patriotism and of their dedication to the preservations of their identity. During the insurgency movements many thousands and thousands of youths perished in their underground activities. By their drug addiction many educated and well to-do youths died artificial deaths. Aids have become a serious problem for the state Government to solve.

Youths as agents of social change

Of the total population of India about 25% of the population belong the Youth falling in the age group of 15-27 years Youths have been instruments of social changes, trend setters with a vision of the culture. Lesin and Mao used them to create and exploit revolutionary measure. To our dismay more than three crore educated young men and women are jobless and are loitering in the streets. The being part and partial of social environment and having an intimate awareness of the current problems, the youths population is adaptive, innovative, possessive, receptive, creative, ambitious, crave for recognition and playful. The period is marked by hormonal change. Desire excitement runs wild and the spirit of adventure

fills the heart and the youth desires to explore the secret mysteries of this life. This urge instead of being channalised constructively, is checked by taboos of societies, resulting in conflict and rebellion, which in turn go underground and seek satisfaction in the forbidden fruits.

Consequent on the break of accepted ethics, gangs, cliques with different codes of conduct challenge those of the religious institutions and home.

With the advance of the knowledge intellectual problems arise questioning the faith. If youths are not satisfied with rational answers, they seek scientific solutions to their problems. In a society patterned to cater to the masses rather than to the individual, questions arise whether life really has any purpose. Is world worth having etc.? Under misguided circumstances they are eager to break away from old people. Their future will depend to a large extent on how the present is handled. Not finding, suitable answers on their own, they turn, to seniors for help. It so happens that parents, relatives and elders fail to understand them, they turn to someone's they like and feel like teachers, workers, friends etc.

It has been the state polity to promote integration through launching of various programmes for the solution-a new work culture, strong motivating culture, encouraging voluntary associations Yuvak Mandal Dal, youth clubs, National youth council, etc. The concerned department in the Centre and different state departments provide scope for adopting several security measures for them. We have enough books, brochures, pamphlets relating the same etc.

The concept of Buddhism is fundamental for any social change. This trinity-Enlightened individual(Enlightened leader/Buddha), organisation (Sangha) and Social commitment (Dharma/Clear principles and objectives).It should be aimed at right from the beginning so that the element of frustration and element of helplessness do not overwhelm the worker. We must remember afresh Asokas mission of sending his son and sister to Singhal or through the adventurous spirit of others who soiled to South east Asia/other parts of the globe. The people of this country transformed the entire vast area of South-east Asia and other parts of the globe. We have to recapture that spirit.

Youth Leadership-The custody of the nation's leadership will be in the hands of the cream of Youth. Contemporary Youths believe more in the leadership of their own generation than that of their elders. They are ready to revolt whenever they feel justice is being denied to them or to their community. It was in the name of justice that youths were asked to raise rebellion against the British rule. This spirit of revolution has gone into their blood and they are ready to revolt against injustice, real or imaginary and follow any leader who would defy authority.

The greatest national need of the hour is right leadership. Leadership is mainly a matter of training. One who would develop into a dynamic leadership style must first be taught to accept responsibility and discharge

with ability and integrity. Preparing a youth for a good leadership like Gandhi, Nehru, Nataji Subhas, and Irabot Singh (in Manipur) will be a great contribution that the environment and institutions can make to the people.

We need democratic and integrated personality rather than aggressive or diplomatic leaders. The former is a responsible leader, and willing to meet apparent half way. He follows principles of law order, non-violence, etc. He is a reformer rather than an agitator. He is above violence, corruption and aggression. He appeals to men's reason and conscience. By such leadership one can bring peace and reconciliation.

III

The solution of this problem has to be sought with the youths and good teachers. The writer offers the following suggestions for further discussion.

1. Guiding Youth to Job satisfactions-Guidance is helpful in putting the proper man in the proper place (to know one's stations and its duties), avoiding a life time of frustration and lack of achievement. By such practice one can find a role in which he can live a well-balanced life and contribute one's quota to social well being. Of the three areas of guidance: Educational, vocational and personal in democracy, personal guidance deals with problems in emotional or social adjustment to one's life and surroundings. It is useful at all stages of life, and at all circumstances since neither age nor educational status makes people immense to such problems.

Illustrations of the need of personal guidance is found in the many people labelled as trouble makers in the community. In many cases they may have ability in handling people, in organising them, and in persuading them to certain courses of action. They would have been excellent professionals in the political or legal areas. But, instead, as with one man whom we shall call, James, that may one dissatisfied clerks. He may be a top trouble matter in his religious institution because it was the only place in which he could work with people instead of with the papers he so hated in his clerical job. A psychologist would say that if James had helpful guidance at the right moment, he might have become a successful lawyer or politician instead of a disgruntled clerk.

In India there is a great dearth of India based psychological tests, measurement tools, guidance bureaus, suitable to the language and cultures of a particular region. In addition to state guidance Bureau, Government employment exchange, some universities, religious and private institutions also sponsor guidance centres.

The need for guidance is felt when we note that our country has many educated unemployed and yet at the same time conceived for skilled workers going unfulfilled in our social, educational and technical areas.

In India many are being pushed into academic subjects or professions whatever they have any talent for them or not. As industrialised society required much more than just armies of clerks, engineers and doctors. It rests first as strongly on the technicians, the factory workers and those who

know how to leave others in such fields as social, [illegible] medical technology and education. It is only as man learns to use his head, hand, body or mind and is respected for whatever he may choose to do in works, then India can become strong.

2. Process reconditioning as expounded by the Behaviourist Psychologist will have some effect in re-educating Indian youths. There is no gain saying of the fact that wrong habits cultivated in early childhood can be shaken off and new habits can be formed.

3. Emotional integration involves a long process of valutional reconstruction to a considerable extent. The aims and entities of wish fixation which so long have been the caste, tribe, community, province, communalism mixed with minority rights, separate hotels, etc. have to be replaced by cosmopolitan outlook, national unity and ideal of Integration. It will release the concealed energies of the masses, the capacity for appreciating the manifold creations of the country. It will foster sublimation by canalizing irrational psychic energies for the master sentiment-love of India as the mother. The masses have a great amount of surplus energy and the same can be used for diverse creative process and not keeping it empty.

4. Exchange of students, cultural troupes and camps of young delegates will foster sense of solidarity, mutual good will and better understanding students or young artists may be sent from a part of India to another and vice versa. For this purpose special facilities such as scholarship, travel grants and railway concessions must be provided. Some funding agencies of the state or centre must cope with the financial matters. The mental attitude of students can be changed for the better though such exchange.

5. Legal and Educational experts are of the opinion that emotional integration can be effected through certain institutional arrangements, viz. unitary system of Government, creation of chair professors for promotion of Indian culture. This will release a number of competent men who are now wasting their energy in petty squabbles for the service of the nation. Further, such suggestions are construed as a means for the establishment of Aryan domination and strengthening of Hindu concepts. Above all politicians are reluctant to sign their own death warrant on certain grounds. It is to be contended further that our efforts for national integration will be crowned with success only if the younger generations are brought up in the loyal and patriotic environment which is opposed to disintrigation and communalism.

6. Young minds must be trained in the values of co-operation, altruism, fraternity and cosmopolitanism/internationalism. It is a tall talk to revive the static conservative, semi-feudal, feudal system of the past. We should not be adverse to western concepts viz. equality, natural rights of man, sacredness of human personality, scientific progress, etc. of the west in production and industries. One must not neglect the old Indian philosophical concepts which had relevance to all ages.

7. As we look back over the history we see that youth reformations have made its most dismal failures. Educational institutions in other parts of the world viz. Hawai, Honlulu, New York, Germany, Japan, France, Belgium, Singapur, etc. are more in good positions than those of India. Children Act. of 1960 was passed with a view to apply some methods to the children. It was abandoned in favour of Juvenile Justice Act, 1986 which was enforced on October 2, 1987. The centre must place in charge of its official agencies in trained persons with enough fund. There was no co-ordination between the centre and the state and official agencies established under this Act. The Act is worthless in view of its poor performances procedures etc. Schools are failing to see the feet of young people upon the right path of righteousness that the system in Manipur promotes 35%-40% of pass students in the examination. About 500 teachers or more are getting salary without performing any duty during these years. What is said of the rest of the north eastern India can be said of the whole of India.

8. Minorities in democracy-In talking about the emotional integration and democracy, we should not neglect the weaker, down trodden section, mentally handicapped, and culturally retarded children. Common good cannot be ensured so long as they remain dissential elements. They must be loved and embraced as our brethren, Democracy cannot afford to neglect the contribution of these sections. It also emplies the development of the ethical self and the political stature of the humblest and suitable representation of minorities. In this task it requires the pooling together of our efforts to liberate the creative energies of the hitherto suppressed sections of the country. It is essential to inspire confidence in the minority communities. Every city in Great Britain has 5, 10, 15 etc., homes for the mentally retarded and the physically handicapped. There are few such names in India. Disintegration comes where there is the gap between the rich and the poor.

9. The Indian youths are interested in having white-colour jobs in cities/towns. Therefore we find thousands of unemployed youth outside the city. They used to go in large numbers in search of jobs. They would be happy with a job of Rs. 1000/-per month. Rehabilitation of rural unemployed youths in more useful self employed and some mechanical works (agro based industries, cottage, Small scale industries, etc.) will solve the problems to a considerable extent.

10. Higher education proved a luxury which India can afford. There is disparity between challenge and response. A balanced curriculum providing an education in democratic values and leading to specialisation where necessary may offer a cure for some ills. A Scientist will be all the more useful if he were conscious of basic values of political and social life. A student of humanities will be better equipped for a life in this highly sophisticated and technological age by an adequate grounding i.e. science. Plato remarked none could join his academy if he were not a student of mathematics.

11. Youths have multifarious roles, as a citizen, as a student, as potential activist, a farmist, as a soldier of peace and integration to play. Serious thinking is needed as how vast their values could be reinforced and their potential utilised for a meaningful contribution in national development. They have coronations of purity sanity and sacrifice. They brought hither, Mussolini, its ideology to power by widespread discontent.

The nation is passing though a crucial phase in Indian history. There is continual war going on between forces of integration and disintegration. We can trace this was right through the scriptures, Vedas, Epics, Puranas, etc. Those who want to fight for integration must notice the asuric/satanic forces. The disintegration finds its domain in the groups, communities and the youth organisation. Youths must be prepared to fight the war by becoming soldier for the peace, and integration. Youth campers, peace lovers, etc. can do something meaningfully if they follow the ideals for ensuring the survival of freedom.

Note and reference

1. Integration and social change and concept of emotional cultural Integration have been discussed in my papers (i) U.G.C. seminar held in 1987 in the History Dept. of Manipur University. The same appeared in the journal of Poona University Manipur students Union, (ii) A speech delivered by me in the National Integration camp on 27/2/1993 in Keirao MASSI complex and (iii) my paper included in the souvenir of Rural development organisation, Lamsang Bazar, 1980.

2. Presidential speech of Dr. Amar Kumar Singh in the Psychology section of 72nd session of I.S.C.A., Lucknow, 1985.

3. R.N. Sharma, **Indian Social Problems** Meerut, 1986.

4. Some of the points are based on the speeches delivered by the following Prime Ministers of India on several occasions-(i) Smt. Indira Gandhi, (ii) Chandra Sekhar and (iii) P.V. Narasimha Rao.

5. My observation based on the Daily vernacular paper of Manipur viz. Prjatantra dated 6/4/1993 and 7/4/1993.

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MULTIPLE FACETS OF RITUALS AND PRIESTLY TRADITIONS IN MANIPUR

Almost all nations, communities and tribes and castes have a series of rites, festivals and priestly functions. They visualise a state in which they live in harmony with the unseen force of nature and win it to their side. It is not necessary to discuss all the rituals and their sources for each community for reasons of space. So I shall confine myself to the rituals of the Meities; the Pujas which are accepted as the foundation and sources of customs along with the priestly traditions in Manipur.

Puya/Purana in Manipur context means sacred lore/texts (scriptures used in the plural sense) which are accepted as the sacred scriptural texts of the ancestors. They are written in Meitei script by the specialists of sacred lore and rituals. Puya or sacred lore comprises prose, poetry and hymns with a number of subjects including rituals of different categories viz. domestic, social, royal (national), legends, myths reduced to writing served as the ground of observing rites. Ritual texts, viz. **Singtapung Jnan, Thounirol, Thounirol Lambupa, Iratlon etc.,** highlight importance of rituals, elaborate process of rituals of each clan. There are ritual texts viz. Naoseng masin, Mera Haochengba Masin, Phamballon which deal with rituals to be performed by the priests at the time of the birth of the kings, customary rites to be performed during the royal festival of Mera Haochengba and rites/duties of every people at the time of the coronation of the king.

The Puya represents also for the ancient Meities the sacred charms and incantations which govern their national and community life. The most striking feature of the Meitei ritual is the sacred method of performing and tantric touch by the Amaibas/Priests which is concerned with the origin and destruction of the universe and keeping a conquered nation/state in the position of a slave nation. Thengkourol a sword dance and ritual on the intricate diagrammatic representation of snake god, pakhangba, the ancestor of the Ningthouja dynasty), Augri (destructive charm), Laiharaoba (Community festival which is the core of Meiteism), etc. contain ritual charms of high standard combined with practical demonstration by an expert). Like any folk songs and rituals of primitive communities, Meitei observance of rites is associated with **Loutarol** (ritual on the first day of cultivation) and **Louta Ishei** (song of farming).

The Meiteis accept the authoritativeness of innumerable scriptures for any purpose and its creed expects its followers, i.e. the Meiteis to follow the injunction of the *Puyas* with a feeling of surrender to Guru daksina the most

excellent Guru (God). The one way to test the veracity of a claim and to solve a problem is to cite the authority of the written *Puyas*. They also follow the Hindu Scriptures in connection with celebration of Brahmanic vedic, Vaishnavite rituals and **Nityachar**, Manipuri life is full of religious and social rites extending over most of the months of the year. Perhaps no other festival or ritual of any party of the world evokes as much influence and variety both in the religion and social spheres as the rituals of the Meities.

Priestly Traditions : While describing the rituals in pre-Vaishnavite and Vaishnavite forms the services of the priests and priestess are to be enlisted by the rulers and the public. The Vaishnavite concept of the Brahmin priests in Manipur looks similar in many respects to the work of Hindu Brahman, except in some local conventions. The ritual experts are called Maibas (priests) and Maibis (priestesses) in the pre-Vaishnava faith of the Meiteis. Priestly tradition is the authority for preserving ancient rituals and worshipping of the old days. *Puyas* were composed in archaic language which was the spoken form at the time of writing. They were compiled for use in the rituals by order of the rulers. Thus the hymns, prayers lay in scattered condition and the priests were associated with the collection and putting these in a former form. The priestly tradition cannot be the development in one day and it has a fairly long history which can be traced with the help of texts. There were Loisangs/royal institutions of department for the maibas and maibis who served the religious needs for the Meities. Categories and classification of the maibas and maibis came into being during the reign of the kings of Manipur, Meitei society consisted of seven or ten salais/clans with a piba or chief in each principality. By degree the Ningthouja king subdued other salais/clans and they became part and parcel of Manipuri Society. It must be noted that a Maiba/priest of Moirang or Khuman clan was responsible for the usage and discipline of that clans and trained its young ones in that school. This schooling continued till all clans were merged in the Ningthouja on political grounds, Several factors have been responsible for the development of rituals and priestly traditions under the king of the Ningthouja/ruling dynasty. There were 3 schools of maibi : Nongmai who serves Yumjao Lairema, Phura who serves god Nongshaba and Shanglen in-charge of Pakhangba. As for the distribution of rites for 7 yeks it is known that the Sang-len officiates for the royal family Phura for Khuman and Khaba Nganba yek and the Nongmai for the rest. Kangla, the capital of ruling family and temples/shrines of Umanglai (forest deities) was the stronghold of Manipuri learning and custom and radiating centres of ancient culture. Here the Pandits, Maibas and Maibis performed elaborate rituals watched by the public and the members of the clans and recited incantation and sacred texts of *Puyas* famed as Meitei Veda or mantra. The role of **maibi** (male or female) was far more important than that of **maiba** in rituals.

During the reign of Maharaja Pamheiball Garibniwaz (1709-1749) sacred ***Puyas*** and priestly records were burnt up. The priests could not enjoy royal patronage and re-wrote the *Puyas* out of their memory and concealed them individually. They practised privately in individual courses. We find much assimilation and borrowing of Hindu elements in the practises of the 18th century Manipur without destroying the ingredients of the earlier faith of the Meiteis. But for the cult of the Umanglai/Sylvan deities and the priestly efforts, continuity of Manipur's earlier custom and tradition without any break would be a far cry in the history of Manipur. The priestly tradition has been closely associated with the culture of the sacred *Puyas*, development of domestic, social and national rituals, wholesome influence of rites on their lives and changes occurring from time to time. Maibas and Maibis occupy permanent place in all rituals as if by a matter of right. Another claim for the priestly classes is that they had direct union with the deities in their mystic trances and cracles and assured welfare of the country in controlling evil influences by their magical power which entitled them for honourable places in these rituals. Manipur has evolved a new type of music, dance on the basis of its tradition. Pena singing or Kirtan is an inseparable part of Meitei ritual. Manipur dance is the Beautiful expression of Meitei ritual.

Purpose of rituals— Manipuri customs and code prescribe a number of rituals for the people in a complicated form for divination, community welfare, fulfilment of their desires and alleviation of suffering. There are rituals connected with such events as, birth of the child, delivery, feeding, ear boring, cleansing the house, haircutting, marriage, death, shradha, annual shraddha which have been existing before the coming of Hinduism in Manipur. The manner of ritual performance varies among the people in some respects. For the confirmed Vaishnava families, they are with Sanskrit mantras and Puja materials under the supervision of Brahman priests of the locality. For the revivalist group these are subjected to ritualistic pujas with verses of the pujas by the priests and priestesses offering to be non-Hindu deities for the purpose of gaining their attention and goodwill. It is obligatory for every house to worship tutelary deity, god Sanamahi (personification of sun-god) and his mother Leimarel (earth goddess) in south-west corner of the house with the offering of incense and lamp in the evening.

There are sacred days and auspicious timings which are devoted to the worship of **Apokpas** (forefathers) of each surname and sagei and clans. The ritual is observed in different ways under the name of Sagei Apokpa (surname) and yek Salai Apokpa (clan or community). The purpose of the latter included the sincere observance of practices, a profound desire to express loyalty to the clan, keenly felt clan competition among the seven clans for power and deep rooted tradition of homage to their identity, arts and culture. The Piba Chief, the father or relatives of a surname, eldest woman in the family, woman whose eldest child must be a son, not a

widow and has been married according to rites, son-in-law (of Brahmin) are competent to do certain formalities of rites of birth, marriage and worship of forefathers. Some of the family members have to take care of important deities in the past according to Umang Lei Sangba.

Laiharaoba Ritual– At present community festival of Laiharaoba has gained significance because of its size, series of ritual preparations, music, dance and social norms. It has in fact become the best known of all Meitei community festivals and draws throngs of visitors from all over the state every year. Over the centuries Laiharaoba of each community has generated sufficient excitement to inspire, ritual, dance, dressing, dancing, custom, music, sports, painting, photo, film, etc. Its purpose is to initiate the merrymaking/play of god and goddess. It is observed by all people viz. Meiteis Moirang, Kakching, Chakpas (their sub-division) with great devotion and this explains the popularity of this ritual among them all over Manipur. A number of myths and legends surrounds it, from all of which one thing becomes clear, it is an occasion in celebration of fertility, increase of population, community well being and worship of deities in human form. It was controlled by the king/ruler. Now its celebration has been taken over by the local clubs and local committee of the concerned area for social reasons.

Since space limitation precluded describing details of various ritual programme of Haraoba, mention of its impact on Philosophical and Ethnic grounds will serve as an example. Analogous to Bihu, Durga Puja, Dipawali/Dewali, Onam and Ganesh Chaturthi in point of popularity is Laiharaoba of the Meiteis. It is worth reflecting on the reason for its superiority to other rituals/festivals of Manipur. The answer lies in the context of its origin when there is no agricultural work, scope for creative work, the places where it was held in the meadow infront of the temple of every Umanglai (in every village). The mental condition is to receive training in social decorum, discipline and sport and martial arts. It is invested with popularity on account of its metaphysical essence of Meitei culture, background of the understanding of inner metaphysical teaching of the universe and man's relation to God. Every people of a clan has to pay religious tax or subscription to the fund at the time of celebration of the festival. The Umanglais were linked to the history of Meiteis. The Maikei Ngakpas were regarded, as the controller of rain, food and crops and protector of mankind against pestilence, disease and natural calamities.

Native fruits, herbs, flowers and fish in rituals– Among the Meiteis the customary offering of tairen (toon wood leave) Langthrei leaves (small medicinal plant), lotus, lily, Yerumlei, Laikhan, native bird, animals and fish for ritual is prevalent. Various articles including grass, lake water, knife etc. figures prominently in the ritual of domestic, state, public natures. Native fish is included in the traditional items as an essential article. Ngamu fish has been described as of the early creations of the Almighty and has had an honoured place in Ushin ritual (to let out a mudfish) from early

times. On seeing the movement of fish in water one can predict the cure of a patient and career of the couple.

Ngamu (mud fish with survival power) is regarded as one of the energy-giving-foods and used by the parents of a daughter as customary presents at the time of her giving birth to a child. Different types of sheath fish/shareng have been to ritual use and food item in connection with the worship of forefather, Umanglai and pre-vaishnavite festivals. Fishes are widely used for feeding the party of newly married couple on the 6th day after their marriage. It is largely used in feeding the married daughters, sisters and old ladies in a ceremony called Ningol chakouba on the second day of Hiyangei/October-November. These days many a rich man has his dish and curry made of different fish. Cultivators look to taking fish curry as a source of their strength. They observe the ceremony of Ngatangba (feast by taking fish curry) after planting paddy in the field and after harvesting and collection of paddy in August and December-January.

Ngakra fish (magur) is also handy for the treatment of a peculiar type of sickness, i.e. Ngakra lai or Hinghabi changba (sickness caused by the vampire or eater of living beings). The medicine man used to offer this fish (or any item of fruit or food also) to the presiding deity on behalf of the victim not to cause further trouble after ascertaining the nature of illness. This method hastens the process of diagnosing this illness equalled by no other methods of modern science.

The Manipuris abstain from taking fish during the period of mourning owing to the death of a relative and took fish after the shradha ceremony. The intoxicated Vaishnavas of Manipur do not take fish in the month of Mera/Kartika a sacred month, birth and anniversary of the guardians sacred Vaishnava festivals viz. Janmastami, Radhastami, Jhulan, etc. There is also the ceremony of Mera Ngatangba which allows taking of fish after vrata. His feeding of fish is called Gayatri Bhajan and taking of fish feasting is known os Nyaya Bhajan.

According to fish lore, the Ningthouja/Rajkumars and Maharajkumars are not allowed to take Ngaril (a kind of fish having the appearance of a snake) as it is a totem to them. The Maibis who played an important part in Laiharaoba ritual are not permitted to take Ngakra and Ukabi and Ngasep which have long whiskers.

Shri M. Chandra Singh, an authority on old *Puyas* made a distinction between customary rituals and religious rituals. Under customary category, mention can be made of Thabal Chongba, Lam taiba, Kwak tanba (Vijaya Dasami), Puja etc. in his estimate. Religious rituals consist of Laiharaoba (merrymaking of gods) annual offering of food/cakes to the deity, Augri, Shraddha, Heigruhidongba, marriage, etc. This is not acceptable to us as customary rites are recognised as religious ones in the belief of the Meities. Religion retains most of the traits and the features of customary belief. Some of the rituals like Lamtaithangja, Lamtaiba, Cheiraoba, etc. are held

at the palace/State level as well as at the village Level. Details of procedure and ritual materials are also different from each other.

Saroi Khangba means the feeding of the incoming and outgoing evil spirits on the new year's day of ancient Meiteis on the 1st and 2nd Saturdays of the month of Lamda/about March. The spirits are invoked at the meeting places of 3 roads by 3 or 5 or 7 women including the eldest women of the village and the ritual is believed to save a member of a house from the clutches of death or to atone him for the next year from the danger of death by the second ritual on the 2nd Saturday. As for the royal court the Maibis worship the spirits in the force of the palace. Lamtaiba is performed by the royal priest on Manipuri new year day, i.e. Lamtai thangja by propitiating the first nine settlers of god and man in Manipur in order to save them from the worst calamities and destruction of the State. It is also observed at the village level. Magic formula mentioning the names of the person who settled the village for the first time and also name of the dead person who was the last in the locality area chanted by the village priest on the auspicious day of Inga/May-June. These rituals were originally observed by the priests of earlier faith and the people after accepting Hinduism gave a different version and retained them as the most auspicious of Hindu rites also, hence the curious coincident of identification of rituals-Cheiraoba as Charak puja, Chingoi Iruppa as Barumi, Yaosang as holi/Dolijatra etc. In ceremonial observance men and woman have to use sacred dress the visible marks of a Meitei/Manipur

To speak of Meitei rituals, if you allow me, I may add the following to the above— Ahong Kumei (rite observed by the kings of the clans in order to usher an era of prosperity and happiness), Ukrong Hongba (annual festival of feeding the ancestral spirits by the ancient kings), Nong Kouba/Rain compelling ritual by worshipping sacred stones with the help of Nonglambu (an official in-charge of the stones), Phoukouba (summoning the deity of corn/paddy), Naosong Masin (rites to be performed at the time of the birth of a child to the king), Thengkhourol (a ritual with a peculiar dance movement for the creation and destruction of the world), Augri hangel (destructive song and charm ritual), Ukongba (marriage of trees) Uyanlon (ceremony of cutting trees), Yurangba (rituals of offering rice beer to the ancient god). In the Augrihangel ritual the number of males and females must be the same by taking their respective seats. Magical chant and movement must be followed by everybody without any stop. If anybody violates the rules by using unclean cloth, food, etc., the calamities are certain for the people. Purification of mind and body is significant for them. The proverb "cleanliness is next to god liness is nowhere so forcibly applied as to a Meitei."

With the abolition of monarchy and merger of Manipur with Indian Union, royal formalies, grand functions associated with the power and prestige of the ruler (say Mera Haochongba, Pakhangba chenghonbga, Kwaktanba, Naukakhela, rituals for the children of the king like Kasa

Paotakpa, cremation ritual of the royal family in Kangla capital etc., came to an end. These festivals reflected the concerns of the rulers and their dynasty during their regime. Now-a-days these rites are observed by a trust in a nominal way with the sanction of Manipur Government. The persons who received royal patronage are no longer respected by the peoples except for religious purposes. The rites and ceremonies throw considerable light on political and social conditions of the people although the description and ritualistic potency as given in our sacred literature cannot be accepted without reflection and discount.

Account of Meitie rituals cannot be adequate without reference to ritual centres, shrines and temples. Every dwelling house has holy shrine, viz. abode of Sanamahi, Leimarel (in the south-west corner of the house), Phungalairu/hearth (a sacred place for preserving fire with help of husks said to be the seat of Emoinu Ahongbi, the place for keeping rice and paddy etc. From the studies of *Puyas* such as Kangla Laiyat, Thiren Laiyat, Leikai Marigi Layat, Noglon Thambal, Thirel Chindumbi, Chingoirol Lamitlols etc., we know that Meitei Leipak was their spiritual homeland and Sana Laiback (land of gold) to all Meiteis. Kangla, the naval centre of Manipur with innumerable Laihams (abode of deities) and rituals mounds viz. Sumnapung/Mesmerism, **Numit pung, The pung** (solar and lunar mound), Nungjeng tank (sacred tank of the royal family) and host of other shrines have been described much more prominently than other places. Belief has it that 108 places of deities must grow on the capital of the palace complex of the ruling authority. In fact all hills, rivers, lakes and villages (abode of Umang lais) are very sacred to the Meities and fit for public and private rites and ceremonies. The waters of Luwangli river, Chingoi rivulet, meeting place of Imphal and Iril rivers are supposed to posses medicinal properties and a dip in these places is recommended for curing incurable diseases of the people. An atmosphere of tantric and blood sacrifice was associated with Hijam Yaicham lake, Mongba Hanba/Shrine of Mahabali Hanuman Thakur, Khumal Kangla, Mayang Imphal, Moirang Kangla, Thumkhongs/salt mines, Sugnu Seroupung, Nambol Heibi makhong, etc. A book called **Irat Laison** deals with offering of puja materials to the deities at a few sacred places. Koubru, Nongmaiching and hills in the Manipur valley are very sacred for the Meities and Tribals. These hills and lakes have been admired by the ancient poets in accounts known as **Chingoirols** and **Laimotlols**. Climbing the hills and a dip or bath in the lakes and rivers is a must to be done at once in one's life time in connection with devotional purpose.

Nongmaiching hill (6 miles from the East of Imphal) is hallowed by the divine sport of god Nongpok Ningthou and goddess Panthoibi and coronation place of Panthoibi as the chief of the gods, is full of tirthas, surungs/caves, Sangai Yumpham and Khalong, where there was no dearth of survivals in the forms of old coins and Khabis/iren sticks planted by the kings for including their names in the list of kings of Manipur. When

calamities visited the country they are obliged to sacrifice a cow in Khalong for protection as well as for kings longevity of life. The place where sacred stone of rain-Nonglum Loknaobi is found is in a small cave of this hill. Rituals are performed even today in this place when excessive rain or drought visited the country. There was Lamtaiba ceremony (Puja to avoid miseries of the people) having been held in 4 ritual centres, viz. Khuraipung in Khurai, Soudongpung in Wangkhei, Wangthoubi in Khurai and Kakwa Lamdaipung in Yaiskul (four sub-divisions of the valley) on the Saturday of Lamta by the priest on behalf of the State and the people.

Since the 18th century Lamangdong/Vishnupur, Canchipur and Kangla became the centres of Vishnu/Krishna worship. The royal deity was called Shri Govindaji. Kaina (the place of jackfruit tree out of which the idols of Govindaji and other royal deities were carved out) became an important centre. The existence of Hindu temples in villages and place of Vrindadevi/Tulashi plant on the courtyard as the essential features of the Manipuri's are also connected with the celebration of Hindu rites, Sankirtan, Gayatri and Homa and Hindu pujas. Temples are open to pilgrims on sacred Hindu days and festivals.

Conclusion

I, now offer the following observations–

1. Ritual is an expression of Meitei culture and administration at its best. Many non-Meities have found their wish (birth of a child, promotion and success) fulfilled by observing/performing Meitei rites. The uniqueness of Meitei rituals lies in the fact that all paraphernalia and a composite tradition have been built up around the rite and ritual to demonstrate, as it were who are the Meities ? What is the composite culture of Manipur ?

This, in my opinion, is quite unique in the history of the mankind.

2. Surprisingly enough the extent of Hindu rituals is not deep rooted in Manipur under the Manipuri Maharajas. Traditional rituals are conducted by the priests and priestesses with regard to cases of abnormal deaths viz. death of a child under 3 years, suicides, death outside the house, mother dying in childbirth and barrenness of woman. Rituals of the traditional type such as Lai sorat sonba, Laiyupanthaba and chup saba were called for to ward off the evil spirits from the family of the deceased. Local usage and elements are too important to be ignored in all state/public and individual rituals.

Like the Japanese most people participate in both pre-Vaishnava and Vaishnava rituals. The Sanamahi revivalist people are trying to observe primitive rituals in all walks of life. But most of these rules have been influenced by Hinduism.

3. The present age is an age of turmoil, social friction and fundamentalism which had done damage to our society. The foremost task

is the reconstruction of a society by a deep study of rites of each tribe, community and nation. However dark the present position of power politics may be, if only we are drawn to different groups, communities through the study of rituals and their significance we can have the democratic and secular way of living. The hill villages Mantak, Chothe etc. inhabited by hill tribes became the favourite place of Meitei deities. The practies of putting on Naga dress is relevant. Lores go a long way in bringing about the interaction in an effective manner. some of the Umanglais and ruling gods and goddesses are particularly beloved of tribals and scheduled castes from whom the duties are fabled to have matrimonial alliances with them. Practices and food habits are different. But a great power keeps the people of Manipur united, a power that is integrated with their way of life, this is the power of mutual appreciation. During the British regime there was a British Reserve Area special permission in needed to have a dip in the sacred Nungjeng tank and the march of religious procession inside Kangla. It was prohibited. It is a join to religious minded Meiteis that the restrictions imposed on the people had been withdrawn since the seventies. Also the matter of vacation of Kangla by Assam Rifles is in its process at the level of Union Home Minister. Rituals also remind them of the great forces operating in Nature and the need for living in conformity and harmony with nature to derive strength for prosperity.

Thanks to the British Government and Meiteis ruiers, rituals of the Meiteis like Umanglai Haraoba, have come to occupy a prominent place in the cultural annals of Manipur. After Anglo-Manipuri war 1891, the Manipuri's honour and freedom was at stake. The British authority allowed the celebration and provided rent free lands for the ruling deities of Manipur.

5. They believed in rituals in the past and remain to this day ritualists, when unhappy episode four visited nation. This thought has governed their mind and action for the last thousands of years.

Notes and References

1. Th. Madhob Singh Pandit (Ed), KHUNUNG SHAJAT LICHAT Imphal, 1983.
2. Information collected from well-known ritual experts of the Palace, Pandit Loisang such as late Pandit N. Amuyaima Singh, Ng. Kulachandra Singh Chief Pandit of Shri Govindaji temple board, Imphal and many Maibis/priestesses of Manipur.
3. Some of the research articles published by late Pandit Achouba, M. Chandra Singh in Manipuri Journals have been collected and scrutinised by me. I had my intimacy with him for about 25 years.
4. Meitei rituals are touched by many writers-Manipuri and non-Manipuri, in their books, thesis and published papers. Most of these descriptions are

of little use for a proper appraisal of the significance of Meitei rituals and customs.

5. God first created mudfish and gave it the power to the life of a human being when their life would be in danger. The people had to predict the fate of the newly married couple or an ailing person on seeing the movement of mudfish when they are released in water. Fishes are connected with faith and treatment of sick persons.

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THE SPIRIT AND EXTENT OF MANIPURI PUYAS (MSS) : OFFICIAL RECORDS AND DOCUMENTS

Meitei Mayek/Meitei script has, all along, through these thousands of years of existence, remained the script of the Meitei people. It was like a torch that gave light to the mankind and never a small wick lighted and kept in the form of hymns and ritual charms. The script follows Brahmi pattern a gift of scholars to mankind in the infancy of its culture.

The sacred texts are written in this script which are much older according to tradition. New letters came to be inserted so as to serve the growing needs of Sanskrit and Bengali influences. This can be seen from the manuscript and inscriptions discovered here. The centre of the development of Manipuri culture is limited to the fertile valley of Manipur although the spirit and extent of influences was wise. Its influence in the Shan States in Myanmar, in the Myanmar court, Tripura court, Cachar and ahom court is prove in historical and pre-historical times by the presence of Meitei names, colonies and interactions in remnants-physical and cultural. The invasions from the east and west is not the beginning of contact between Manipur and these neighbouring states. Manipur and its culture were known in the regions in far off ancient periods. It was the consequences of long-standing spread of the fame of Manipur's stable administration and spirit of accommodation and high level of cultural attainments.

There were activities in the field of staying this script during the centuries (33-1949). It was obligatory for the rulers to patronise the retual experts-**Maibas** and **Maibis** for compiling the texts. **The Pandit Loisang**/Royal archives has been in Manipur under their supervisions. It was customary for the Lairik yengbam/writer class, Kabui and **Maring Nagas** and **Loi/Schedule** Castes people to, attend the **Loisang** and culture the Meitei script. The court Pandits were powerful writers who uses their pen for the preservation of Manipuri culture and civilisation. Some of them were recast and developed in the 18th Century. Some of the sacred lores have become untraceable to us on account of wars among the warring clans, devastation's by the Burmese/Myanmaris in a number of times. The burning up of holy *Puyas* took place during the reign of Maharaj Pamheiba (1709-48) at the instigation of Shantidas Gosai of Sylhet and also by the angry British after the fall of Manipur in Khongjom war, 1891. After the expansion of modern education, secularism and growth of political consciousness since the forties of the 19th Century there arose many voluntary institutions and Associations. We recorded the works being done

by scholars, Maibas, Maibis and intellectuals for the cause of this script inspire of the set backs caused by the burning of *Puyas* of this script twice accidental fire in 1922 and adoption of Bengali script for Court purpose and religious needs during the period. The collection made by local Pandits and lovers of old literature from the custody of Nagas, Lois and Brahmans of Myanmar, the additions in Bengali script of Meitei works, the critical exam. of old texts and deciphering scripts of the coins and inscriptions are among the praise-worthy works at present. The *Puyas* have not only services of these changes but have built a bridge between Manipuri and Indian culture-Sanskrit Bengali and Maithali. In Manipur Meitei script has its cultural value which supplies the basis for its foundation. However it occupies a less important position in the educational system from the modern view point. Persons having knowledge in this script were accorded lower position in relation to those who knew English, Hindi, Bengali, etc. It is not considered as an essential qualification for purposes of appointment in service before 1972. However, it is given its due position in higher studies and in the States services after attaining Statehood of Manipur.

The establishment of Manipur state Museum, Archaeology and State Archives (1982), under the supervisourhsip of Arts and culture Directorate is a land mark in the state for which the Government took the responsibility of haunting the merit records and preserving the wealth as a fair index of culture and civilisation. The archive collection contains-malls which represent the purchase from individual scholars as well as donations of individuals and institutions. It brings out albums, leaflets, brochures and guides to the reference media, 7 index records and brought at books in the series, the important one being a reprint of vocabulary of Manipur to English Dictionary by a Political Agent of Manipur.

By way of comment it can be pointed out that its collection are many on Meitei script and some English book including the English translation of **Chaitharol Kumaba** and efficient records. Its importance will be enlarged and enhanced if its activities is extended in collection Bengali, Assamies, Nepali, Hindi and tribal dialects of every district.

From the manuscript source and modern records we can form the following ideas in the following paragraphs.

Different Names of Manipur

Sacred puyas viz., **Sagok Lamlel Ahanba** and **Soubon Lairema Louta** and **Sagok Sading** had given some clues regarding the names along with the origin of the word Manipur in different ages. It has changes its names and sizes many Limes according to the authorities but all these names and remained confined to the valley portions. The rivers flowing in the valley make fertile and it has become a cradle of civilization since early times. An observation is attempted to hold they the arduous test of nations or state building took places. In fact now a days there scattered in parts of Assam, U.P., Bengal, Bangladesh, Assam, Myanmar/Burma and lived

read of formation of salais/clans; large scale clan assignments to the new comers by the kings. Its social fabric was woven out of the warf of Ningthouja clan and the woof of Moirang and other elements. To these were added the elements which came from contacts with the rest of India since the 15th century.

A brief reference may be made to some aspects of cultural change since the 18th century. Knowledge of Bengali and Sanskrit became necessary for royal service. Astrologers and priests had to learn them as the books were written in these languages. The revenue officials had to learn Bengali, Persian and Urdu for dealing with records.

Organisation of Manipuri society and minority groups

Manipuri Brahman Pandits and scholars of Hindu lore also produced works, the important available being Vijaya Panchali Series in Bengali, Dharani Samhita (Sanskrit), Vyavastharnav, a simplified Manipuri version of Samvandha Nirnaya, Bamon Khenthoklon (Brahman migration), Account of high class Brahmans engaged in the devotional services of kings), etc. Not surprisingly the themes are on Hindu Vaishnava culture and religion. The appeal of these manuscripts is great since its scope is enlarged to include myths, legends and custom of the people.

The cultural and religious synthesis is shown in some of the myths and texts(myths reduced to writing) which try to explain certain phenomena viz. creation of Imphal valley and Lai Haraoba and Rasa festival. Imphal valley was in ancient times under water and became habitable only when it is dry after draining the excess water. These phenomena have 2 explanations-one pre-Hindu and the other Hindu both supported by the *Puyas*. According to the ancient myth Guru Sidaba, the Lainingthou drained it and made boats out of Uningthou. It became habitable, the gods performed the merry making dance in Kanglei, Kabru and Nongmaiching.

In the Hindu version of the appearance of this valley it is Lord Mahadeva who drained out the water through Ching mung hut by his trident in order to find out a place for dance in emulation of Shri Krisna's dance with the Gopis in Dwapar Yuga. He made it habitable and the first king was Ananta, the snake God of the nether world. Both versions are accepted.

Observation from British Record

The British Source materials written from their military and diplomatic standpoint may be official or non-official. Under official records may be included Parliamentary debates Manipur 1891. Administrative Reports of Manipur Agency, Treaties, Memoranda, Tour Diaries stored in common wealth Relations office Library, British Record Office, National Archives of India and some state Archives, etc. Under non-official records mention may be made of Travel Accounts, diaries and pamphlets of the Britishers. "We know from them that Manipur under Maharaja Chandrakirti was one of profound significance not only in north-eastern India even in East Asian

relations. Manipuris hostility to the Burmese and friendly to the British played an important part in the conquest of Nagaland and Burma/Myanmar. Before Anglo-Manipuri war it was an independent Asiatic power. In preserving the scripts Manipur never suffered from shortcomings so common in Indian India after 1891 war.

Well-known is the question of Kabow valley as a source of dispute between Manipur and Myanmar caused by British policy. Manipuri claimed this area by representation through the British, chamber of Princess and Free India Government. Not so realised by the local people was the British attempt to divide the hills and Plains of Manipur and final plan of forming a sovereign state known as New England between India and Myanmar. From documents it is known that British interference in Manipuri affairs and treatment meted out to Manipuri nation alistic heroes like Bir Tikendrajit and General Thangal resulted in the killing of them and loss of Manipur's independence. National Leaders were dissatisfied with the attitude shown and steps taken by crafty British agents like James Johnstone and Zemposon who had control over Manipur. The British policy was reacted by Bengali Nationalist leaders and the press. The pictures presented by British Records and Manipuri accounts (along with Bengali sources) are of variance totally.

Enter the Christian Missionaries

Christian Missions took advantage of bad political situation in Manipur to start evangelism for Manipuri people. Old records from William Carey and Baptist Mission inform us that as been the age-old custom, Manipuri translation of New Testament was one in their series.

Many of us know of William Pettigrew whose birth centenary celebration fell in 1996 and who attempted to Christianise the State with British help after 1891. Christianity made its first appearance by baptising local Meiteis, Nagas and Kukies. His attempts in the valley was without success. He met with the opposition of the Vaishnavas under the Maharaja. However Pettigrew helps to inspite the opening of L.P. Schools in the hills and plains for modern education. American Baptist mission of which he was the pioneer has had induction's, missionary medical works in Manipur. As a result the hill tribes embraced Christianity. His great personality is stamped on the history of education of those times. Later other Schools of Christianity began their work. My information is gained from sources— Reports of the Missionaries, letters from Evangelist, private later documents of all missionaries in Manipuri hills, reports of British, Mission Society, private papers of Baptist Missionary British Missionary resolutions and proceedings. They throw light on the relationships between the Colonial masters and the Missionaries. The joint efforts of several missions like A.B. Mission, Roman Catholics, Welsh mission and 7 day Adventists helped the tribals in the new Christian life very much. The hill areas of Manipur are still lovely places for the tribals to live in. Now all areas became a trouble

and dangerous places on account of ethnic clashes. At present the killing among the Christians is at its worst. The situation is a grief to all peace lovers.

Conclusion

1. Had there be no burning of Mss and had it remained an independent country Manipur would be in a position to reveal to the outside world its precious treasures like the corpus of documents on Roman history; Peshwa and other Maratta records.

2. The induction of British conception of History into Manipuri history caused a revolutionary change. Manipuri history after the Mangba Sengba and Nupilal (purification scandal and women's war) has become the history of common man. History unfolded the spirit of the age. By criticising the corruption of the autocratic regime and repressive measures, we know about the weal and woe of the common man since the British period.

3. The records and mss are of different categories-Sana *Puyas* (palace mass) Sana Yathang (order of the Maharaja under his seal) Hukum; parwanas Thaba (of lesser types) and news of palace institutions. The holy texts oral records including those before and after Anglo-Manipuri war were stored in a wing of the palace and in a library of the palace. The scope and content of these records were characterised by the History of Meitei world and influence of Bengali and Persian works. The British source materials written from their standpoint existed in Shilkong and Manipur Secretariat, Imphal were worked upon and published by many writers as the official and dependable ones. The Palace records with emphasis of the ruler and the Royal family constitute a basis of Manipur's historiophy in the assessment of the members of Pan Manipur Youth League and several local groups.

4. The state Archives must do to make available the documents in foreign offices bearing on the relation between Manipur and those states.

Bibliography and Notes

1. Vide Descriptive Catalogue of Old Manipuri Manuscripts edited by late R.K. Sanahal Singh (Imphal 1992), whose volume deals only with holy texts in Archaic Manipuri (some in Bengali letters also) contains more than 400 entries with English Language, additional particulars and classification of nature.

2. The Archives' collection of records and mss (transferred by Manipur Secretariat Library and law Department) and documents transferred by several State Deptt. during these decades have catered to the needs of concerned.

3. For general understanding of holy texts the exhibition sponsored by recognised cultural Association viz. Sahitya Parishad, State kala Academy, Pandit Loisang, etc. may be mentioned.
4. Manipur Past and Present Vol.II, New Delhi, 1991, pp 169-179.
5. Administrative Reports of Manipur (1891-1948)
6. Modern Trends of Librarianship in Manipur (being the collection of Seminar papers of first State Library Conference held on March 30-31, 1996).

Part II

25

SEVEN DAYS IN JAPAN (MEMORABLE IMPRESSIONS OF JAPAN)

My period for passport validity is about to expire. Although I was keen to visit foreign countries in some capacities the chances are rare. Dr. Mrs. Asha, my wife arranged for my stay in Moscow during 1989-90 while in her study period. I could not go on account of family troubles. Meanwhile I got one notice about a symposium session on Influence of Philosophy on Social Sciences in theory development in connection with the 13th International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in Mexico City. I have prepared my paper and submitted to Paul Dixit, Professor of Psychology, Hawai University who happened to be convenor. He was so good as to accept the same and extended his invitation to me to visit Hawai and U.S.A. also on my way to Mexico City during July-August, 1993. As for any queries concerning financial assistance and other support from the organisers during the session he has forwarded my Application to Paul Schmidit, Academic Programme Co-ordinator of the conference. Professor Paul Schmidit has allowed me registration scholarship, hotel reservation (subject to my payment after reaching there) and wrote to North Eastern Council, Shillong for giving financial assistance to my visit at my suggestion. I entered into a series of correspondences with such funding agencies as ICSSR, ICPR and ICHR, New Delhi for financial support by submitting my application in the prescribed forms. I also wrote several letters to the Office of Indian Council for Philosophical Research to provide me with a copy of the proforma for my application without a single reply. The North Eastern Council, Shillong and most of the funding agencies in New Delhi had turned down my request on grounds of high plane fares and some peculiar decision making processes. Shri S. Ibohal Singh, Minister of Science and Technology, Govt. of Manipur is ready to support my trip under the scheme of the Department and we have started processing up the matter although the plane a fare has been increased by 15% with effect from July 15, 1993. On account of financial crisis the State Government has issued the ban for all purposes. Any officer has to take special permission from the Govt. of Manipur with the approval of the Chief Secretary according to the existing order. I got station leaving permission from the Government for Mexico Conference only without T.A./D.A. from the

Government. I have gone to Gauhati passport office for the change of the address of my wife, contacted the travel agents in Gauhati, contacted the agents in Delhi, American and Mexican Embassies for transit visa and tourist visa and funding agencies for release of fund. Although we have got tickets for Mexico via Calcutta for our long stay in Mexico and Japan we have to give up the trip on account of limited resources and leave problems from the Govt. of Manipur.

My wife and I myself came back to home and reached the same on July 12, 1993 after a long train and bus journeys with occasional parting of company. These happened on account of bus and train starting times during the time of communal riots in different parts of North-Eastern India.

In my place my aunt received on 8th July the urgent message from Sastry, L. Kambhanpati, organiser of International Conference on Atharva Veda and Michael Witzel, Chairman, Dept. of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, Harbad University-Director of the Conference advising me to reach Dag Hamarskjold Auditorium, New York for presentation of my paper. International Foundation for Vedic Education, U.S.A. looked forward to seeing me on July 12 and intimated to me that U.G.C., New Delhi advised that the participants selected by them for them would be given travel grants through Universities. Further I am advised to contact my University in this regard. Curiously enough July 12 is also the day on which my publisher Manas Publication released my book 'The Folk Culture of Manipur'. This was a great day in my life. Of course I submitted my paper on an aspect of Atharva Veda with special reference to Manipur to the organiser and did not correspond with them for a long time. I had only 4 days preparation for this conference. Since the two international conferences took place at different times it has become difficult for me to seek another station leaving permission from the Government of Manipur even before one in hand was complete.

I got State Government's order for Mexico Conference but gave up and joined the College work. I used this occasion, i.e., some days for teaching and for joining the centenary celebration of Manipuri poet Hijam Anganghal Singh in Imphal.

My wife Dr. Mrs Asha Gupta was planning to attend XV International Botanical Conference in Yakohama, Japan and got letters of invitation and acceptance of her paper/upto-date news of the gathering in Asia for the first time. She has paid for her registration charges. Both of us had been for long harbouring a strong desire for visiting foreign countries under the cultural/scientific exchange programme. We started corresponding with the embassy, Central Government funding agencies as well as with the members of Indian communities and institutions in Japan.

We decided to take some bank loans and LIC policy loans to meet our expenses for visiting a costly country. My wife was a person of great will. She worked on an average of many hours a day for correspondence, typing out papers, seeking information about our journey. The labour which she

had put in the work for change of address in the passport, preparation of visa, foreign exchange etc. is difficult to imagine by those who did not witness it. Indeed our proposed visit spoke of her pragmatism, perseverance as well as adventure. There was some delay in the release of her salary from CSIR, New Delhi on account of University's strikes. She would not brook any obstruction to, and any delay in our visit. She was lucky in having co-operation from the authorities of her employment and Manipur University.

I have also decided to go there as an accompanied person and to help her financially. The invitation to attend the world conference was extended to me with some provision for accompanying persons in the programme. Accordingly I moved the Government of Manipur to grant me earned leave for 12 days during which period I must visit foreign countries with no-objection certificate and sanction of leave as per the rule. I got the order after much difficulty in file processing. My wife proceeded on her move to Calcutta in advance and completed the formalities for ticket, visa and foreign exchange. We experienced some difficulty in obtaining the visa from the Consulate General of Japan as he questioned about my participation in the Botanical Congress, my signature verification as I was after the station leaving file in Imphal, I went to Calcutta by Indian Airline plane on August 25, 1993 and my wife received me in the airport at about 5 p.m. on the same day. We had our comfortable stay in the boarding and loading of International Society for Hare Krishna Consciousness, Calcutta for 2 days. We have succeeded in getting the visa from the diplomatic staff of Japan which is always watchful. The Royal Thai Embassy issued the transit visa without much trouble.

After due checking of our passport, visa and luggages we got our Air India plane on 27-8-93 at about 8 p.m. we were looked after by Indian Air Hostess with Indian papers, magazines, songs, T.V. films and food.

At about 10 p.m. we reached Bangkok airport, the first foreign airport in a foreign country which I with my wife had the satisfaction of staying for one hour. Some of the passengers were getting down here with their luggages. New passengers are coming for Tokyo. The experience appeared to be unlike any that I had anywhere in my life during the past years. What caught my eyes, during the night journey in the plane were the passengers of different nationalities, professions, etc.

At about 8 a.m. on 28/8/93 we reached Nerito Airport where we could see fair complexioned, moderately tall Japanese people with uniforms, some in their old-time Kimono dress and short hairs. To our amazement no coolie was available to carry our luggages.

After staying in the airport for more than one hour for conversion of money into yen, collecting information about the routes and taking some refreshments we have decided to reach Pacific Yakohama the venue of the Conference with our luggages by Govt. train and come back for our stay in the ISKCON centre, Tokyo. It was a good drive giving us a glimpse of Japanese countryside, buildings, farms and fields. During our rail journey

we were struck with wonder when we saw attractive pictures, charts, railways maps, air conditioned rooms and perfect regularity of timings. Can we ever have such things-computer method of ticket issuing, checking, absence of water, tea and eatable things in the train and underground railways are new experiences for me. We used to eat the nimkis, potato chips, biscuits and nuts which we brought from India.

After some time in language communication we came to the conference hotel with many rooms, floors and decorations. My wife reported to the conference counter regarding our presence and collected her materials for poster presentation. My wife joined the reception of the delegates being arranged by Crown Prince Naruthito and his wife with abundance of free bottles of beer, rheum and some typical Japanese food. By this time Emperor Akhito and Empress Michiko were on tour for Rome and some western countries viz. Italy, Belgium and German. The election time was over some months' back and the new Government were busy with framing policies under Liberal Democratic Party Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa.

Amongst the participants, organisers and guest speakers whom my wife could meet and talk on this day were Kunio Iwatsuki, Prof. Masaki etc. There are some seven or eight Indian delegates including Prof. M S. Swaminathan in the gathering.

At about 10 p.m. we came back by rail for our stay in the ISKCON temple which is close to Detabasi Railway Station. On account of language communication we are coming in wrong railway route. Instead of coming to the correct route we made the confusion between Itabasic and Detabasi and come to a far off station, i.e. Itabasic. Persons in railway service do not know English. When there is language difficulty, the Railway counter called a Bangladeshi national (3 other Bangladeshi Muslim are coming here) to interpret in Japanese to him. He spoke to us in Hindi and at once we realised our difficulty. His name was A. Ali who was doing hotel business in Tokyo for about 5/6 years. This tall youngman was free from cheating, joking and any rude manner. He is leading us to place of destination by helping us in many ways. He spent from his pocket about 1200 yens for our rail ticket, taking cold tea in the Japanese hotel and in finding out the location of our centre. He and a Japanese gentleman with his cycle rendered yeomen' service to us. It is different to meet peoples of Indian sub-continent abroad from meeting them in India. Japanese hospitality is also unique.

After contacting the caretakers in the ISKCON we have accommodation for the night. I was in the same room with one delegate from Kerala. He was serving in a University in Africa. His trip to the Botanical Conference was financed by his institution.

We had 7 day programme in Japan out of which we decided to stay in the temple for 3 days and the rest in the hotels. August 29 happened to be Sunday-a day of feast of Mahaprasads for the Hare Krishna devotees. The

bhaktas with chandan marks and beads came for Mangalarati of Hare Krishna. The Brahmacharinis of ISKCON and some small girls also arrived in sari, tulasi beads and chandan marks. The whole morning programme went in arranging and cooking Mahaprasadam in the Vaishnava way. The temple devotees having been to Mayapur were well trained in vegetarian preparation from Shri Mayapur under the Matajis. It was our privilege to have taken part in devotional services chanting of beads. One Singhalese gentleman who was in Tokyo for his training joined the movement. We had conversations in English about different issues. He informed us to join the Sunday programme of ISKCON in different places. They will provide car for us. About our routes from Railway station to ISKCON office, he gave us the shortest route from Honancho Station.

After Mahaprasad we started for railway station for going to different places. We arranged our own tea and took our Indian made packets for refreshment in suitable places. Though we could not spend much time in meeting and sight seeing programme we saw temple of Yama in Shingjuku, Imperial garden and some Shinto shrines. As we wanted to join the Sunday feast we decided to return to our place. On account of language problems and lack of familiarity we took many hours in reaching our place of stay. After reaching there we get ready immediately to go to a devotional programme in a building. The ISKCON is providing car for us to that place with their literature, picture and prasads. Here assembled about 100 bhaktas, Indian communities, Sindhri businessmen and Bangladeshis for cultural and spiritual fellowship. The person who was ringing the bell with offering of light was a Japanese Bhakta. He could not speak out and acted through signs and gestures. He could drive car nicely.

Then came time for devotional services under the leadership of Japanese bhaktas, in which all followed the singing, chantings and counting of beads with the names Hare Krishna and Bhagavata discourse in Japanese language. Then came a most valuable period, discussions in small groups, etc. Then distribution of free Mahaprasadas which the bhaktas and matajis, Brahmacharis came all the time. Tapaswini was the Secretary of International Society for Krishna Consciousness Centre and her husband was the President. About 30 people are taking Hare Krishna into their hearts. The rest of us shared in their joy, for their faces could not and did not conceal it. The function was arranged purely on Vaishnava style initiated and popularised by Prabhupada, Founder President of International Society for Krishna Consciousness. We met all of them and the Indian residents gave us quite a fund of information about their trade, Japan's problems and worth seeing places.

Next morning on 30/8/93 we joined Mangalarti of the temple. Then scripture memorisation and Bhagavata discourse by an English member of Krishna centre took place. He had Japanese citizenship. He was from as far away as England. He is a confirmed Vaishnava Bhakta who conducted the discourse by chanting Sanskrit slokas. The discourse was in English and

translated into Japanese with tap records. I put questions about theology and philosophy of the Vaishnavas. Later we got prasads and set out for Tokyo University.

With the help of a Japanese girl who studied in England we found the location of the Department of Buddhism and Indian philosophy and met Prof. Dr Yasunori Ejima, D.LITT, Head of Department in his room. One Indian student who came on exchange programme was also seen. He himself conducted us to the Library, Journal room and some members of the staff. He presented a printed copy of Abhidharmasabhasya of Vasubandhu, Chapter 1 Dhatunirdesha, Chapter 1 Dhatunirdesa edited by him in 1989 under the series of Bibliotheca Indologica Et Buddhologica. He was a student of Prof. B. G. Gokhale of Poona. We could not meet the Indian Professor in the Department of Oriental culture and Sanskrit as we were due to contact the tourism counter of the Botanical Congress at Yokohama for our tour on the next day. We met by chance one Belgian lady (studying in Japan for some years) from whom my wife learnt much about the railway lines and tourist places. We reached the venue of the Botanical Congress by 5 P.M. Then we bought tickets for Mt. Fuji for the next day at the delegates' rate. This saves money as well for such long journey. We used to collect interesting leaflets, magazines, books and bulletins which are open to the learned delegates of the gathering.

On 31/8/93 we started from our place for Yakohama at 4.30 A.M. and reached the starting point of the bus at about 7.40 A.M. by train. There was no rain and the sun was shining brightly. About 50 delegates from U.S.A., Belgium, Canada and India went by an air conditioned bus under the guideship of a Professor of Geology and a lady. Because of comfortable journey, we could see well the countryside. A visitor cannot but be captivated by the geological importance of Mt. Fuji, trees, plants and shinjen shrine of the goddess of Mt. Fuji and her sister, the view of the clouds from the 4th station, fossils, plants on the Alpine Belt and lakes. We could take as many photos as we liked. From the 5th station Sabran line the botanist collected species of plants, weeds and grasses for their analysis. I was surprised to see some common grasses for their analysis. I was surprised to see some common grasses and plants viz. Laichakhrang (a kind of small plant), Yempat (), a small types of bamboos and Shingnang (tall reeds with brown tuft.)

Like Manipur Japan is 80% mountainous and has the lowest percentage of arable land. During this trip I could not see birds or any other animals. I saw only two or three dogs with their masters.

We had our lunch in the Japanese hotel with pulao, selfish, Ngaching (shrimp), Mairel champhut (saltiless curry of pumpkin), noodles, etc. After this, we set out for the return journey and could see the visitors' centre which was full of flora, fauna, geological materials and tourist information. We returned to Yakhohama by bus after enjoying the beauty of the hills on

both sides which kept us fully engrossed in viewing them on Yamanashi side.

Later we started for the Honqncho Railway station for going to the office of Indo-Japanese Friendship Association for our meeting. By telephonic call we got information from the Secretary Mr. S. Misone that we should reach Tokyo Railway Station's new building by 2 P.M. and should wait for their people. They will be coming to receive us within 2 minutes. In fact, the Director in charge of cultural exchange arrived and received us. His office is within 2 minutes walk from the new building. There we met Secretary and 2 clerks. We had lemon juice, snaps and talked about the works carried on by them. Incidentally, I mentioned about deeds and sufferings of the Japanese in Lokpaching (17 kms from Imphal) and Japanese style war memorial coming up under public initiative. I then, got some cards and handkerchiefs from them in return for which I presented tourist calendar, some leaflets about Manipur issued by the Government of Manipur. After some time we went to the station with a lady authorised by the Secretary of the Association to help us in our programmes. This lady who is on the staff of the Association is due to leave for Bombay on the night of this day.

My wife had her poster presentation programme in the Conference at about 4.30 P.M. and took the rail ticket in a hurry and reached the same as Scheduled. Thereafter she did her work of demonstrating the problems of her paper to the learned delegates. There she talked to a Russian Professor in Russian and English about their papers. He informed us about the financial instability of the then Russia and his coming over to Japan with the assistance of U.S.A. Another significant event which we hailed with joy in the open room was that many learned papers were distributed satisfactorily to the delegates during the hours. We got papers, leaflets, magazines and bulletins for the first time in English, Japanese, French, Spanish, etc.

On 2/10/93 on our way to Pacific Yakohama we went to Bigonia garden, Hakone station, hot spring in Kapatengo as our important programmes. We could see flowers of different colours, garden designed with water, trees, shrubs and attractive landscape and stone boulders. It was a sight worthy of being remembered. Flower is the symbol of Japan in many badges, calendars, letter heads. Reflection on varieties of flowers made our journey pleasant. One Japanese lady was good enough to take us to the hot spring where man and woman took to bath in their chambers on payment of 2000 yens.

We went to kamakurai Buddhist shrine (30 miles away from Tokyo where we saw the brown statue of the Great Buddha (Doi Butsu). It is about 44 feet in height erected in 1252 AD. The Buddha sits in the open space looking out on the sea. The same revealed the Indian inspiration of bells, swastika marks. It was one of the wonders of the world. The shrine having been burnt the figure stands beneath the sky undisturbed by any disaster.

While going into the great temple we saw strips of paper tied to the trees for some prediction, attractive cards, photos and books. We took photos of the Buddha-the first Manipuri ever recorded to have a darshan of the Lord.

We reached the conference office and moved the organisers for participation certificate which was to be issued in the evening of 3/9/93. Then we had a glimpse of the Yakohama Railway Station in the evening-its Beach, port, historic ship, shopping centre, Lord Plaza, etc. By chance we met R.J. Luxmoore, Professor of Ecology, Ohio University who came for a lecture in the Conference. Being the President of International union of forest Research Union he gave financial support to my wife for an international conference in Finland in 1989. We talked to him twice during this conference.

By rail we reached our hotel at about 10 P.M. It rained slightly. We got from the ISKCON Bhaktas that there was a telephonic call from some Indian associations expressing their desire to meet us. But we could not converse with them in the night. We also met one manager of a book publishing concern, New Delhi, on his way to Los Angelese, U.S.A. for his business. On 3/9/93 after our launch we started for setting the Meiji shrine in the heart of Tokyo. It occupies an area of about seven lakh square metres and contain almost one lakh trees of various kinds. We could see the main shrine of emperor Meiji and his empress supposed to be the maker of modern Japan. The Japanese are coming with traditional clean dress for praying in the temple. A small museum houses the artefacts belonging to the emperor and empress. Emperor worship was a cult when Shintoism was more powerful. The Emperor of Japan was the king of kings and lord of Lords. The Japanese were the chosen people to set Asian countries and peoples free and ultimately to rule the world. This idea seems to be at work in shinto shrines.

Then we did a little shopping in the market. We reached the conference hall and attended the closing function at about 3 p.m. It is not possible to write for this congress in detail. However there are features by which I being an Observer cannot fail to be impressed. I could hear the learned delegates talking among themselves that a philosopher from India was also attending the function. Probably they may get information about my presence from my wife who reported the same to the organisers.

(2) A visit to such oversea conference is a must for all who can afford it in view of its scientific information and literature. (3) For life Scientists a visit to the same and meeting such plant life scientists such as Prof. Mikiono, Peter Raven (U.S.A.), Geff Schell (Germany), Gold Berg (France) and Macmillan (U.K.) will be a pilgrimage in one's life time. (4) It is a pleasure for us to breathe the unpolluted air of Japanese city and walk by the mountain-sides of Mt. Fuji amidst the learned scientists.

From Indian delegates we learn that air India flight service for 4 September might be cancelled on account of typhoon No.13 which hit Southern Kyushu after passing through Okinawa. It may visit Tokyo very

soon. So our chances of leaving Japan as scheduled are reduced to the minimum.

Then our visit to Imperial museum, Ueno Imperial Park, Kannon temple (Japanese goddess for Lakshmi/mercy) and some more shinto shrines took place in the evening. Most shrines are constructed on woods, and in keeping with the tradition of architecture in merging in the surrounding. The temples are full of wood-carvings, paintings and decorative designs. We are particularly interested in taking photos, collecting cards and literature of the Japanese shrines. We must make special mention of the Imperial palace and underground evacuation place which we visited in the light. We came back to our place of stay at about 11 P.M. Here we got the confirmed news about the coming of natural disaster and bad weather for the next morning.

Our time is not enough and was fully occupied with many programmes. No impression however brief can fail to mention Japanese love for their language at all levels of communication, administration and more so in the shrines which are found throughout the world, co-existence of Buddhism and shintoism, fine aesthetic sense, influence of Indian culture on Japanese-bearing troubles stoically, politeness, patriotism, handwork, simple living, discipline, punctuality and mutual CO-operation. These qualities are sadly lacking in India. Roads and houses were kept in the plastic bags. They believe firmly in the saying that cleanliness is next to Godliness. There is no crime on the streets at a time when juvenile delinquency, insurgency and law breaking are on the rise in other countries. The Japanese have several words for "work" but no word for "leisure". It is a country of Maruti type cars. Almost every house has a car. Most of the cities we have visited viz. Tokyo, Yokohama, Singjuku, Gotemba, Dixerio city on the way to Mt. Fuji were big cities with sky-scrappers, glass structures and modern electric equipment's. In the Railway stations I could not see gambling and too much drinking except one or two cases of drinking by some persons. The rises in prices of commodities are causing much trouble to us. The rate of exchange was Rupee 1 Indian money for 3.33 Japanese yens. Both of us spent about 22000 yens or more daily for our going to and fro by train.

Thinking of Manipur's relation with Japanese since World War II, I made the following observations.

(1) The Meitei appearances are so alike that it is very difficult to differentiate me in the aircraft as well as in the gatherings. I was treated as a typical Japanese by them in conversations and queries. It is known that when a Meitei girl and women put on Kimuni dress they are cognizible as Japanese ladies.

(2) Like the Manipuris, there is courtesy and ceremoniousness in Japanese manners. They bow to each other with folded hands. The respect shown to the elderly people and kneeling position are common to both.

Women in general take great interest in domestic work and are docile. Such similarities cannot escape our casual observation.

(3) If one enters a house one cannot go with shoes and sandles. They have to leave the shoes out side. The same is found among the Meiteis. Linguistic affinity has lived in Such Manipuri words viz. Sararn/India (Iab-Sora), Ikon/place of water (Iap-Iking) and polite mode of expressions-Chajagiko (allow me to eat), Tonjagiko (allow me to do). Further we can illustrate with the example of the relation between verb and adjective in both languages.

(4) Japanese aesthetic sensibility and flower arrangement reminded me of Manipuri Vaishnava love of art. Art invades all life in both countries. Flower vase is compulsory in any Japanese room. Flower arrangement has not evolved into a concrete art form as in Japan but has drawn inspiration from Indian concept of Purna Ghata with flowers, plants and foliage from the mouth of the vase in the opinion of noted flower artists. Like monk artists of Japan, our malis and arangphams (managers of articles) adopted fruits and flowers as means of rituals. The arts of making garlands of paddy, peas, angur (grape), flowers and of putting plantain, sugarcane and fruits are nursed in Manipuri soil which engrossed the artistic attention.

(5) Like our Manipuri Sumang Lila/Jatrawali only men take part in traditional Kabuli theatre and even act as a women. No women is allowed on the stage in Assamese Vaishanava theatre as well as in our lila in the past.

(6) Food items like those pictured above are rice, ushoi/bamboo shoots (Take-Nu-ko in Japanese), Hawaijar/fermented soya bean (Natto in Japanese), Uyen/mushroom (Shuetake in Japanese), Chakhao (sweet scented rice), Nungsham/river water weeds (Nori in Japanese), Thambou/lotus-eater (Renkon in Japanese) in Japan and Manipur. Use of Heijrang (knife), style of cooking with less of Chilly, oil and spices, use of salt after eating, ample use of vegetables, etc., are much the same.

(7) Mats are used and spread in many Japanese rooms. The inner-side of every house becomes a chaste and inspiring temple of beauty. The early style of Meitei house building with the slanting portion of the front and rear roof of Tumnou (tiny rubs) leaves is found in Touchou prefecture of Japan.

(8) Like the early and present Meiteis in Japan there is a Girls' Day, Father and Mothers' days where presents were made either by the parents or children. We have to part with Japanese people eight memories-memories of land of the rising sun of the people who died in the soil of Manipur (Takone No Hona-A flower of high mountain) by thousands during World War II, a nation with Mongoloid stock and Buddhist heritage, nation of traditional martial arts like Judo and karate, and a country of economic growth first and foremost on our own lands by their method of agriculture, use of cultivable engine and sound environmental policy. We wish we had some more time for scrutinising Japanese Geisha party and Kabuki theatre in spite of our witnessing the performances in the

conference programme and of contrasts; old buildings, tea ceremony offering contrasts to night club and cabaret shows aftermath of American occupation.

Notes and Performances

1. Prof. Saji Makini "Manipuri Atoppa Japan Ama" a Manipur article (tra) included in the special issues of Toknga (a daily Manipuri Paper ed.) by Th. Phalendra Singh, Dated 23/7/94 and 30/7/94.
2. The tourist guide book and bulletins issued from time to time by Japan Foundation, Embassy of Japan in New Delhi and newspapers consulted by me are very instructive.
3. The International Botanical Congress which, I attended with my wife had among its participants many Botanists, Ecologists, etc., Visit to mount Fuji with them is interesting.

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A VISIT TO THAILAND (INDIAN CULTURE AS I SAW IN THAI LIFE)

On September 4 we have already scheduled to leave Tokyo by Air India to arrive in Bangkok on our way back according to our tour programme. We felt depressed when I saw heavy raining and fog in the sky. We were threatened with the typhoon visit and cancellation of air flight in the morning. We sent by car up to Shingjuko Railway station and got the bus bound for Nerita airport by our ticket. After booking our languages we started for the aerodrome. As we drove in the morning, we admired the picturesque view presented to us clean roads, trees, buildings and traffic system in Japan. In the international airport we saw how Japanese security men and women with their dresses and uniform, performed their duties. In the airport we saw many Indians-men and women coming for different directions. We met and talked for some minutes.

At the airport we got the facts regarding the death of 3 persons and missing of 40 and cancellation of domestic and international flights. A car ferry wrecked at Kogoshima Port after being hit by high waves and winds from a powerful typhoon heading to Shi koku and Chugoku. My wife quickly had been looking forward to get any plane for Bangkok on this day. It was lucky that the weather was better after some hours. There was a Japanese plane for Bangkok where we got good seats after changing planes according to the International flight rules. Checking and due reporting were duly done in the office and we started flying in Japanese plane at 10.30 A.M. Tokyo-Bangkok flight took about 6 hours. In the morning journey we could see scenery below when we were on the move in a good Japanese plane. The attractive Japanese air hosts and good looking hostesses entertained us at coffee, tea, juices, lunches and tables with Japanese styles. It was a delightful experience to see Japanese video films, listen to songs and read Japanese newspapers and tourist magazines. We took lemon, orange and apple juices as many as 6 times as we are not prone to take liquors. I was a little tired and there was pain in my right hand finger movements in the flight.

We reached Bangkok airport at about 4.30 P.M. We had taken some hours in collecting our luggages, collecting information from the tourist office, foreign exchange programmes (conversion of Dollars into Bahts) We had deposited in the cloak-room a bag said to contain the literature of Botanical Congress and of Japan. Both of us were concerned with our passport books, tickets and money. In the Royal Thai air counter we have changed our flight schedule for Calcutta in Thai plane.

As in Japan here also we had some language problem as most of the Thai people did not know English or Hindi. We got the rail ticket after some trouble and moved to the central railway station of Bangkok. We reached the station at about 11 P.M. and took the help of the local people with English knowledge to find out the ISKCON centre near General Post Office. Bangkok looked a little tame after Japanese cities as also Indian cities. The hotels, railways and shops and buildings draw Indian pattern in many ways. But no one is allowed to stay in the station after 12 P.M.

Hiring an autorickshaw we drove to the Hare Krishna Centre with the help of Indians taking tea in the Naaz hotel. We show our card to the priest in-charge of the temple who was good enough to provide our room. The president of the temple who was a Bengali Bhakta had gone to Calcutta and Mayapur for some programme. The caretaker was a good devotee from Peru and his Vaishnava name was Garuda Bahana. His father was a Peru and mother a Bengali. This same night we saw many American disciples of Shri Prabhupada, the founder of Hare Krishna movement. The temple must provide room where we can stay for 3 days subject to vacancy, free of charge according to rules of International Society for Krishna Consciousness. After bath we fixed up the programmes for some days in Thailand. By the time we went to bed it was about 11.30 P.M. at night.

The ISKCON temple was a two storied building with wood furniture, a modern kitchen as well as the temple and spaces for kirtan performances. As there are a few bhaktas we got up and joined the devotional services conducted by the Bhakta. We stood in deep humility before the idols of Rukmini/Radha Krishna, Nar Singh and idol of Shrila Prabhupada. Pictures, paintings on the wall and devotional books, journals in English and Bengali are seen by us in the room. The ISKCON devotional prayers and songs in Bengali Prajabali from the tape record was very interesting to me. We sat in rows with instruments of mridanga, cymbals and clapping. Many times I played on instruments like mridanga and cymbal.

Next morning after taking lunch by us with the acting President we started for the Grand Palace by Thai bus. I could see women serving as Bus conductors for the first time. After getting down near the royal palace we took advantage of halt to see the small market (opened on this day-Saturday) and bought Thai made bags, handkerchiefs, photo roles from the Thai studio. After taking cold drinks we took tickets from the counter for seeing emerald Buddha, musicians, of coins and royal museums. The gates are closed at 4 P.M.

With the help of guides we saw the assembly of elected members, coronation hall, government offices, chapel royal of Emerald Buddha constructed by King Rama I at the time of founding Bangkok city. The attractive murals within the chapel Royal above the window are the traditional life story of the Ramakien, the Ramayana stories, the different pictures of golden hue-Garuda, Buddha etc. and Thai temple architecture does something more than satisfy our geo-physical curiosity. It makes us

believe in the greatness of Indian culture outside India. We could not withhold our respect for the Thai people for preserving Indian culture without any colonial entanglement. There was heavy raining at about 5 P.M. With the help of a Bangladeshi Muslim and a Hindu Indian from U.P. serving as a hotel cook and chowkidar in Bangkok city we took the regent bus number and drove to our place of stay after some trouble. We had our dinner with the mahaprasad which was prepared by a girl devotee from Penang, Malayasia. She was a Buddhist and now got herself initiated into Harekrishna Bhakta. She was living in a house of her relatives in Bangkok. It being Sunday, September 5/9/93 there was Sunday Feast programmes in ISKCON temple. We met many Indian residents and traders and Thai devotees assembled in the temple. An American devotee of Shrila Prabhupada (who had a Thai wife and daughter) wearing the dress-dhoti of a devotee and having shikha sung bhajan and gave discourse on Bhagavat Gita, at the end of which I put question on the allegorical significance of avatara and Krishna's lifting of Mt. Govardhan. He answered the same from the standpoint of a devotee. One Sindhri gentleman who happened to be a dealer of gems and jewels joined the service as a Bhakta. He was a life member of ISKCON trying to Log Angeles via Bangkok.

Invited by Ravi Kumar, A Tamil, a leader of Viswa Hindu Parishad in charge of East Asia through some persons my wife and I myself went in time and called on him in his room.

We talked of Hindu cultural impact in Thailand and Bali, secularism and Indian administration, Buddhism and its role at some length. It was too late. The Indian traders served us tea, bhurjia and drink. They also requested us to have one lunch or dinner in a typical Indian style in their room. The Peruvian Swami was locking the gate as it was too late. We are tired in body and entered our room when the devotee opened it.

6-9-93 The Swami from Peru was indeed kind and asked both of us to help him in doing Mangalarti and preparing mahaprasadam. I myself beat the mridanga, cymbals and counted the rosary. My wife recited the Gita slokas and sang repeated the scared bhajans. Her preparation of Puri, halwa and dal was good but the Sabji of bitter karan (bitter gourd) and rice prepared by her for the first time was over burnt although the Swami praised her. Other devotees came for mahaprasad. After this, a bus took us to the museum side about 3 miles by 11.30 A.M. The ticket for Imperial museum Wimen Mek Palace was valid for 15 days. We spent about 1/2 hours with the tourists and local people of Thailand.

About 40 minutes trip by another from the royal gate took us to the museum, the largest teak buildings in Bangkok where there are about 300 people working in the museum contains the jewel ornaments, paintings, dresses and personal rooms of the king and queen. Thai royalty. This is the store house for the cultural historians, poets, painters and anthropologists for their antique data. The sight of the statue of white elephant with a Thakal and phiral satra over it in the building, Khagi Leihao plant with red

flowers and varieties of flowers, trees, etc. teak buildings is an unforgettably attractive ones. With the help of some lady guides we went from one room to another and the private museum of Rama V.

Thereafter we visited the Thai Handicrafts museum Hall sponsored by the support of Foundation of Her Majesty Queen Siriket. This is one of the best handicrafts I have seen. I may add here that something, basketry, silk weaving, wood carving, ceremonial artificial flowers augment their regular income. We took water, cold drink and some snack from the shop.

Then we proceeded further by seeming the bazar, book stall, 5 Buddhist ashrams, temples which accommodate many monks of Buddhism. We spent some time with a young Thai monk who had studied and is editing a Buddhist text in Thai character, the copy of which he has shown to me. Thereafter we entered a big Buddhist temple where many monks including small boys prayed to Lord Buddha daily for peace, communal harmony and understanding. These are solemn places which beggar description in modern context.

Mount Buddha (Wat-Sa Ket)

At about 5 P.M. we reached the temple of the Golden Mount on the top of a hill. It was begun during the reign of King Rama I (1782-1800). It contains relics of Lord Buddha, and affords to visitors a panoramic view of Bangkok. The stupas, rock cut designs and the temple smack of the influence of Indian art forms. We took many photos of the place but nothing came out of it on account of our camera defects.

We took tea, drinks and some food at the stall. Hence we got a bus for the Hindu temple at Bangkok when we arrived at about 9 P.M. A Thai gentleman who knew English and was in Calcutta for some time helped us and took us to the South Indian Hindu temple. We could see the idols of many Hindu deities, offering of light, singing of bhajan under Indian priests in the city of Bangkok. We are fortunate to see many Indian communities in a foreign country at short notice.

The next day the Swamiji of the ISKCON centre asked me to accompany him in the bazar for purchase of vegetable, ghee, cotton and fruits. The prices of fruits and vegetables like cabbage, cauliflower and lemons cost us many bahts (Thailand coin). A Bengali Bhakta of ISKCON from Silguri arrived and prepared the Mahaprasadam with typical Indian style and lemon juice.

At about 10 A.M. we started to go different Universities in Bangkok by bus. With the help of some Thai students we went to the chamber of the Professor and Head of Linguistic Department of Silpa Korn University who had information about the opening of Sanskrit Department with Dr. Asha Shastry, wife of Dr. Prof. Satyavrata Shastry, Professor of Sanskrit, Delhi University and ex Vice Chancellor of Jagannath Sanskrit University, Puri. I have known Dr. Satyavrata Shastri since 1975 and met him in the conferences of All India Oriential Conferences as sectional Presidents of

some sections. He got the Thai Government's highest award for cause of Sanskrit learning and happened to be the Sanskrit Tutor of the princess of Thai King.

Then we went to Thammasat University Bangkok 10200 at about 12.00 After telephonic call the peon took us to the room of Dr Nongluksana Thepasawadi, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Social Administration, Member Secretary of India studies centre. The chairman, Prof. Srisurang Poolthapya was attending a meeting and I missed the chance of meeting during my stay on this day. We spent some time with Dr. Nongluksana who stayed in Delhi University for her PH.D. studies. She was showing me the programme copy of the proposed seminar on Indian Influence on Thai culture on 8/9/93. We had a good exchange of ideas on Indian studies and the programme of the centre with the active support of Indian Embassy, Internal and External Affairs Ministry and Indian communities. As there is free registration charge we have decided to do registration and to take part in an interesting theme.

We have the opportunity to visit Maha Chula Buddhist University and paid homage to the organisers for the constructive works being done for Buddhist studies in Thai style. The Dean being out of station I met and talked to Deputy Dean, venerable Dr. Pithoon Vidhuro, who was my contemporary. He received his training in Poona and Aurangabad and joined the newly established Buddhist University and is now the Deputy Dean. There are seen the syllabus both Thai and English version, classes, journals in Thai language and research publications. He gave me a copy of the Buddhist syllabus and conducted us to the Book Stall for seeing the Buddhist books. I had purchased some of them for use. The visit is well worth a new one.

We visited another University, Mahamukut Buddhist University, Banglumpoo, a few miles from Mahachula with an auto Rickshaw. With the help of a young Buddhist monk (Dhana Ram who had been to India) we met venerable Rajavisuddhi Kavi, Deputy Director of Academic Mahamukuta Raju Vidyalaya. Our talk centred round syllabus, Indian studies, Research and teaching in this University. This University is mainly concerned with the training of Buddhist monks. The Deputy Director received his education in Chandigarh in the eighties. He provided tea for us and also a Xerox copy of the syllabus with special reference to Buddhism. After meeting him we proceeded to the nearby Buddhist temple with the help of the young monk. Here we saw the collections of the King of Thailand from all Buddhist countries like China, Indonesia, etc. about some designs, relics of Buddhism as expressed in the temples, ashrams and artistic works our visit is not considered complete. One curious impression we had after visiting Bangkok city is the canal with bad drainage and impure water. The motor boat service is not satisfactory.

We got the auto for going to a big shop for purchasing books. The young monk was giving us a good deal of valuable information concerning

the King's patronage of Buddhism, Buddhism in Thai Constitution, organisation of Ashrams in the state, etc. We did shopping and purchased books on History, Philosophy, parks, fruits of Thailand and a small Dictionary of Thai words we returned to our place.

There being no problem in ISKCON temple we have decided to stay there for 2 more days subject to the payment of some donation. We had our mahaprasads of Hare Krishna style prepared by that Bengali Bhakta.

On 8/9/93 by about 10 A.M. we reached India Studies Centre, Thammasat University for participation in the conference. The Indian Ambassador and the University authorities and special Indian invitees graced up the Seminar Papers on Indian influences on Thai Art, literature, religion, etc. were presented by the appointed readers. Summary and comments of each paper in Thai was also done by each Associate Professor. During the time of question and I being a delegate from India offered a brief observation. The collection of paper is highlighting.

In the evening we sent for shopping in different places. My wife purchased a camera, lotus flower for table decoration cards and some ornaments.

On 9/9/93 at about 7.00 A.M. we are ready for our departure after the devotional temple service. At the instance of the Swami we got our prasad with lemon juice. Getting a taxi for Baht 250/-we sent to the Royal airport for report. There are regular air flights from Bangkok to Calcutta by Thai Airlines. We took our bag from the airport on payment of the charges and booked for Calcutta. The checkers for the cabin are strict in allowing bags for us. They took my bag and issued a card for identification and collection in a separate space. We enjoy the Thai rice, sea food, tea, coffee and juice in the plane journey. We had the benefit of service by Thai air hostesses in several ways. They gave a number of Thai magazines and newspapers in English to us during the two hours journey. Important news was read out by them through the loud speaker. Thai pictures, films and plane were not inferior to anybody.

Happy with our visit to Japan and Thailand we were back again from our long and exciting foreign tour on September 9, 1993 at about 2 P.M. in Calcutta airport.

For the benefit of people who might like to know about the Indo-Thai cultural ties, I give below my experiences of my trip in some detail.

Indian culture as we saw in Thailand

An Indian saying goes that those who visit "Swarnadvipa" or "Savarna Bhumi" do not usually return but those who do so bring enough silver to last them for generations. Immigration to far eastern countries must have been started by Indian traders and merchants who took the initiative into remote lands lured by the prospect of fabulous wealth they were supposed to progress. According to scholars Savarna Bhumi of the ancient Indian texts included Thailand, modern Indonesia and Bali. In Thailand there is a

place known as Suphan Buri which is corrupted from Savarna bhumi/puri. The country was known as Gandhara in early times. One part of it was known as Videha with its capital called Mithila. It continued to flourish till 1253 A.D. M.C. Chand Chirayen Rajani has established the theory of identifying Shri Vijaya kingdom with the southern peninsula of Thailand on astronomical date.

The cultural link between India and Thailand has been proved beyond any trace of doubt by the numerous visitors in the past from the south and east of India (Bengal and Bihar). Whenever the Hindu and Buddhists colonised, they took with them their own culture to the new land, they ultimately made it their home. The most interesting aspects of Siamese culture, the veritable paradise for archaeologists, anthropologists, linguistics are the names of Sanskrit/Indian names of places, personal names of Thai people-both male and female, familiar Sanskrit words in Thai language and naming of beautiful roads of Bangkok, the ruins of Ayuthia, the murals of the vast of the Emer and Buddha and hundreds of Hindu and Buddhists images testify and carry us back to the ages past, when we shared a common heritage and drew inspiration from the same source-Indian culture. Large scale migration has been proved by archaeology, epigraphy and tradition and contemporary records, particularly Chinese records. The same can be gathered from the numerous legends and stories, the Jatakas and the Katha Sarit-Sagara, all of which may be not of sound historical credence, but the cumulative value of which cannot be ignored as some evidence of the memory of past history.

The routes followed by the traders and monks were both overland and maritime. The memory of such ancient enterprise is well preserved in the legend of Agastya, persisting till to-day as the upholder of 'Aryanisation.'

Thai Religion

The Religion as found in Thailand/Siam is an amalgamation of Animism, Buddhism and Hinduism. As in other parts of South East Asia so also in Thailand both Hinduism and Buddhism were curiously incorporated into their belief. Theravada Buddhism (Hinayana) of Sri Lanka is practised by over 95% of the present population. Local tradition record the conversion of Mon Kingdom of Dvarvati (Nakhom Pathom) west of Bangkok and also sending of 2 missionaries by Emperor Ashoka before the division of the two basic Buddhist sects in 700 A.D. Later the Thai migrated from Schina adopted Sri Lankan School of Buddhism although they made their acquaintance with Mon Buddhists. King Surya Vansa Rama (1279-98), the greatest Sakho Thai monarch invited a Buddhist monk from Ceylon and made him the chief priest of the Buddhist Church with its doctrine based on Pali texts. He joined the Buddhist brotherhood himself. His model is still followed by the royalties many of whom enter the Sangha and the King must receive the priesthood training for at least one year.

The Buddhism continued to thrive under the regime of Ayusthaya and Bangkok rulers. King Rama IV (1851-68) who was himself a monk before

his kingship founded a stricter monastic sect which still co-exists with the traditional order. Late King Rama published a good edition of Pali Tripitaka, patronage the translation of Pali works into English language. Being a graduate of Oxford he knew the new trends. The present monarch H.M. King Bhumbol Rama IX's devotion to the dharma is proverbial in as much as he claimed to be the head of all Buddhist communities of the world. The same led eventually to Thailand being declared an independent Buddhist state-the only one in the world.

Hinduism had grown in influence as the ruling dynasty and the common people had invited and utilised the Brahman priests monks from India to serve as priests and teachers for all walks of life.

It is suppressing to note that there are many shrines for Brahma in Bangkok while there is one famous temple of Brahma in Puskar in Rajputna. There are three famous images of Brahma, one at Pushkar, other at Khed Brahma and the third at Nagara. According to my informant Ravi Kumar, Chief of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad for South East Asian countries a series of misfortunes visited the star hotel maker during the construction. As advised by Brahman priests he built a shrine for Brahma/ the god of fortune. It bought good luck to the hotel-Erawon. Since then people living in Bangkok city flock to the temple and did regular worship. Traditionally Brahma has 4 faces but the Nagara image has 3 faces and each has a beard and moustaches. Nagara is about 3 or 4 miles north of Khambhat/cambay.

Garuda, the carrier of Vishnu is very popular in many South East Asian countries like Indonesia and Thailand. The author can see golden coloured Garuda idols at the entrance gate of Buddhist temples and many shops of Thailand. Garuda is the national symbol of Thailand found on utter heads of office letters, seals and personal emblem of the king of Thailand.

Hindu Epics and Buddhist Jatakas

A Thai is quite familiar with the stories of the two great Hindu Epic and Buddhist tales which are in their language. The Thai version of the Ramayana is known as "Rama Kien". All forms of art-sculpture, painting, classical dance and puppetry are involved with the Ramayana. Sculptural scenes at Lop Buri (Lava-Puri) of the 12th century in silver. Bas reliefs at Wat po are from the epic. 152 bas reliefs in Wat Pora Jetubon, the funerary temple of the ruling dynasty of Thailand, mural paintings in the Vihara of Wat Nong Phya in Thitsamulok in Northern Thailand. 152 marbal ponds (King Rama's version of Rama story) and wooden panels of ordination Hall of Wat Po are drawn from the Asian epic-the Ramayana. Ravana is painted with 10 faces arranged vertically-one at the base, one at the top at 2 side at intermediate stage. The 178 paintings round the verandah of Emerland Buddha said to be the longest series of the paintings of the world have been periodically renewed and redrawn.

In discussing the legends, tales and literature of Siam one finds that they have been from Indian literature. They are not however lacking in interest in recreating them. It is a part of the national culture and the French

School of Hanoi has collected 27 masks representing heroes of Siamese Ramayana.

Its influence is inestimable. In paying homage to the great authors of these two epics, namely, Valmiki and Vyasa, Poet Rabindranath Tagore has remarked, "Glory to the twin poets whose names are lost in the morass of time, but whose message brings strength and peace in a thousand streams to the doors of millions of men and women even to this day, and incessantly carries self from long past centuries and keeps fresh and fertile the soul of India."

Dance and Music

Ramayana themes are used for the classical dance in the country and of temples as well as in Bangkok hotels and restaurants. They are enacted with traditional dress to the accompaniment of melodious instrumental music. Both boys and girls among the aristocrats and middle class families learn dancing and music to preserve their past culture. They set an example of emphasising on the murders and gestures. International Ramayana festival was hosted by Indonesia in 1971 during which 7 nations offered their interpretation of the Hindu epic in the 10 day glittering festival. Burma, India, Republic, Malayasia, Nepal and Thailand participated in it.

Language, script and literature

There are ample philosophical records showing Indian influence on the culture and language of the Thai people. Language being a part of culture is a means of cultural exchange. The relationship between India and south East Asia led to a vast exchange of culture in history. A large number of Indo-Aryan loan words, most of which are derived from Pali and Sanskrit entered the Thai vocabulary. These loan words are to some extent changed in according to their native tongue, i.e. shortened by the contraction of some sounds or syllables.

Indo-Aryan words used for Kings, queens, royal families and monks, used for religions, poetic literary and technical terms are used in formal expressions and even in everyday life.

Words like Karuna (please), swatee (swasti, welcome), chan (jal or water), Devalaya (temple), Vidyalaya (college), dhijan, dhamma, sangha, Bikku, chedi (chaitya) are freely in use. Indian personal names, viz. Prem, sagar, Ram, Uma, Subhadra, Rukamini, etc. are in use. A teacher is called 'achan' (acharya). The students bow in anjali to the teachers in Indian fashion. Roads and Parks for example reveal Indian names, viz. Yubaraj Road, Ashoka Road, Lumphini Park, etc.

The Thais had a script a thousand years ago. It look like a south Indian script of about 5 century B.C. The songs Thailand boasts many productions of the edition of Pali texts, commentaries and sub-commentaries notably volumes of Pali Tripitaka, 30 volumes of the Atthakathas and 10 volumes

of the Pakaranas in Siamese script. Literature on humanities in such fields viz., Buddhism in social development, cremation volumes in honour of important persons according to Thai kings and research theses for PH.D. on the Vedas (in Sanskrit) have come to be produced.

Sanskrit epics like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata are popular themes for recitation in Siam/Thailand. References to Siva, Arundhati, poet Mayura's (father-in-law of Bana, the court poet of Harsha), praise of the sun, a king of Kashmir in a passage with a double meaning are to be found in the inscription of veal kantal (found in Toule Reopen-another province possessed by Siam upto our times). To quote ". . . . . with the Ramayana and the Puranas he gave the complete Mahabharata and arranged for a daily recitation without interruption. As long as the glory Tribhu vanashwara survives, whoever participates in this reading of this great and virtuous deed go to (the credit of) every door of such a pious act."

Scholars in Indology continue to have such fresh books as Rama Kien by J.M. Cadei in 1971, Ramayana Thai by Manich Jamsai-more or less based upon the bas relief in the temple of Vat Po.

The kings who admired both Hinduism and Buddhism utilised the services of Hindu Brahmans in connection with important state functions. There is inscription which reveal that Kaildasa's Raghuvamsa canto, Mahabhashya of Patanjali, Sankaracharya, Somadava, Arundhati and a king of Kashmir were known to Thai scholars.

Dr. Satyavarta Sastri made a deep study of about 40 Sanskrit inscriptions some of which were of recent discovery. The temple in which the King of Siam is crowned even to-day is known as Mount Kailas. The chief priest of Hindu temple in Bangkok city is a descendant of a Brahman from Uttar Pradesh who came to Thailand some 200 years ago. He observes faithfully Hindu scared injunctions in respect of wearing dhoti had sikha (lock) of hair, reciting Sanskrit mantras during worship, preserving prayer books written in Grantha script of South India. But he had become a Thai long back and merged in the local population. Idols of Hindu gods like Vishnu, Shiva, Ganesha and Buddha are worshipped in the temple. The Buddhists visit it for worship and study the school run by the temple authorities.

Sculpture and Fine Arts

Indian culture did not escape the attention of Siamese Artists who had taken delight in representing the Buddha seated on the Naga with the hoods held over his head. The Naga Mucalinda scene showing the protection of the Buddha's enlightenment created primarily as reminders of Thai faith. The Thai sculptors drew inspiration from the themes of the Krishna valley. Human figures of Buddha with enigmatic style is characteristic of khmer style in the art of Siam and Cambodia. The descent of the Buddha from Heaven after preaching the law to his mother is one of the representations at

Bharhut and is a popular theme in Gupta and mediaeval sculpture. This is depicted in a variety of forms in Siam.

The special feature of the Buddha flanked by Brahma and Indra the one holding a parasol and the other a chauri is represented suggestively in Siamese sculpture with some Local variations. Besides Hindu-Buddhist images other figures of Hindu mythology adorn the Thai temples.

Architecture-Architecture has strong association with chedis or pagodas which are bell shaped with graceful tapering spirs, or as Khmer prongs, finger-like spires.

The Thai musical tradition is traced to the influences of Indian, Javanese, Burmese, Malay and Khmer style. Respects are shown to Buddha images/old and new, ruined or complete of different mudras, amulets and Indian mythological figures. Being an important centre of Theravada Buddhism, the role of Buddhist monks in popularising the three jewels and Pali language need no introduction. It is still the common practice for most young Thai men to enter the monkhood at least once for a period of 3 months for training of Buddhist lent.

Notes and References

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THAILAND AND MANIPUR-A STUDY OF THE ETHNOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL TIES

The paper is an attempt to explore the interesting findings in the ethnology of and Thas and to unfold some of the relationships connected in their culture. Burma is a kind of buffer state between the Meitheis India and Shyam/Thailand. The Thai/pongs were the inhabitants of Assam and South Asia and their habitants expanded upto Manipur Valley in early times. The Shans/Pongs of Burma is Kkhamt's of Assam, the Laos and Thai People belong to the same SHIMEE's stock of the Mongolians. Genetic experts of Japan are branch of the Mongoloids, on account of the blood similarity, physique and face expression.

The discovery of the Hoabinolian culture at Nongpok Keithelmanbi has brought to light the material remains such as pebble, tools, better market pebbles and striker, a few flats and blade of an easy stone age. Interesting finds from Manipur is the peak axe with used mark which have parallel in South East Asia. Parallels, we can cite are those of the (TAN)-Pra-Minor Stratum in North Thailand and Goa., Cha cave in Kelentae/Province, Malaya. Manipur had been in early period under 4/5 PONG/THAN TAIS (a branch of Tais and migration of these groupes in this part).

Political relation between Manipur and Thailand was featured in a number of references. Mr. W.Shaw, in his, A NOTE ond the THADOU KUKIS writes "in 707-the King of Thailand defeated the Manipur's king NOTHINGKHONG which is a KUKI name. After that, Manipur was ruled of the THAIS for ten years." These defeatly was interpreted as the expectancy of the SUZERAINTY of NANCHOU under KOLOFENG by Manipuri troops and NAOTHINGKHO. sent a troupe of Musician, and Singer to Emperial court of CHINA. This relations picked up and quoted by the Scholars like-W. YUMJAO, R.M. NATHO and Dr. P. GOGOI in their research works. If we study, the history of Manipur we find that the KOLOPHENG possible visited BURMA, ASSAM and TIBET and north Thailand. As for Manipur the gap of 400 years between NAOTHINKHONG and KOLOPHENG of Yunan and absence of an independent kingdom in THAILAN were scarcely conducive to such statement.

When the Burmese attacked THAILAND and captured AYUDDHAYA and razed the city the Burmese King carried with him troop of Manipuri-Horse-men trained in the use of DIRTS (ARAMBAI).

This troop was formed out of the Manipuri captives settled in different cities of BURMA/Myanmar

We must not fail to pay special thought to the similarity between Meiteis and Thais on the following aspects.

(i) Political and Religious conditions.

(ii) Linguistic and literary approach to their closeness.

(iii) Belief in trantic practices and

(iv) Cultural symbolns, lotus and a scared object cens, pheral shastra and Thankan, caopy, etc.

(v) Common food habits.

(vi) Ceremonies common to both countries and

(vii) Qualities expressing indoor games in sports and martial arts etc.

(viii) Common fruits/plants/ Orchids and animals

(i) Political and Religious Parall's

It seems worthwhile to dwell at some length on these aspects. Manipur had strikingly similarities with THAILAND in having-primitive beliefs and to religious facings/faces. The THAIs like Meiteis seem to have reached so distinctive conception of the sky as the Father, as so aptly suggested by the Meities who have extolled the God as 'PA' as the father. The Hinduism in the form of VAISNAVISM was the state religion of Manipur in the 18th century inspite of so many earlier elements in its composite forms. Forced labours was found in SHIYAMEEs proper. Every SHIYAMEE is obliged to give 1/3 of the year to the service of the King. The same is known as KHEL system in the AHOM administration in Assam. This compulsory attendants of every male members in the kings' court is known as the LANLUP system among the Manipuris and was current., till it was abolished by the BRITISH.

In Thailand too, Theravad Buddhism enjoys the patriotism state patronage flourished as the State along with the earlier facts, life the PUYA MEITHABA (Dedication) of old PURANAS in Meitei scripts to the fire by Maharaj Pamheiba at the instigation of SANTIDAS GOSHAI. May of the Thai religious books scriptures were lost during the destruction of the AUYTTYIA CAPITAL BY the BURMEES in 70s and 67s. Regard for the ruler kings as the head of Religion is too strong in both communities. The centralization and standardisation of the BUDHHA religion was entrusted to the BANGHQUO style of practice and organisation by the Acts of the State. The BUDDHIST was an instrumental for political purposes, the same was an instrument for political purposes, the same trend was found in Manipur Vaisnavism before the merger of Manipur with Indian Union in 1949. The cultural, educational works of the state was championed by the Kings in this state. In Thailand a series of troubles, took place for the democratisation moved in BUDDHISTs SANGHAH since the *cities*.

Of late, there has been a set back in the no. of man entering the BUDDHIST a comparative silence of THAI intellectuals and the difficulties

in abstaining free foods by the URBAN monks and concentration of power by the upper class in the SANKERA, the same phenomena were affected in the Religious life of Manipur Hindus. Manpuris etc.' VAISNAVs under the Secular democratic Constitution of India faces the challenges an obstacle coming from the rivers valleys, religions, organisation, Christianity, Bangladeshi Muslim. The temple management is under the Govindji temple board constituted by the state under the act of 1978.

(ii) Linguistic and Literary affinities

In the Opinion of Modern researchers, the Thai language is a member of an Independent families called-THAILAND rather than a member of Sino-Tai Group in the SINO Tibetian families. This language is mainly spoken in the region of South Asia, southern part of China and some parts of INDIA, The Meitei language exhibits similarities with the Thai....

Language in having monolcylla bs was without any inflexion, a fixed stone associated with its syllabi and attaching importance to syntex in determining the meaning of each word (GRAMMATICAL, lexical), The scripts of these two groups-the THAIs and MEITIEs are moddled largely after old Indian influences. The people of both assumes the Hindu names, adopted Hindu customs and the minutes since early times.

SANSKRITISTS and INDO ARYAN loan word are the too many in their vocabularies. Sanskritists was the Court language of them. SANSKRIT terms, are used for religious rights polite expressions and even in every day life of the higher people in both we observe with some authority that the SANSKRIT loan words are changed in accordance with the native tongue. Sometimes, lengthen or shorten these words.

We can pursue, this line of studies by noticing the following words found in both languages;-WOOD = CAMAL. CHALAK = CLEVER, COFFA, BERRY, MORN= PILOW: SCALE = CHANG, CHA =TEA, VINE = ANGOOR, INK = MOOK, as AGE = AYU, HELL = NOROK, GRAND-FATHER = EPOO, MANDAV = , BIG = IMPORTANT =YAI, CHING= , PLACE, MOHUTHS = HANDLER OF Elephants. Meitei words, vizfus Pha bai and nu are of Tai-Shan origin.

In the content of folk literature, love-stories, Khamba and Thoibi of Moirang is found in Thailand. Also, under the guise of different title, The interchange is as yet under your study the Thai han History , are in verse.-

(ii) Belief-in : Tantrik Practices

The Tantric authorities draw attention to the close connection between India and South East Asia on the basis of the TANTRIC CULTURE. This theory was virtually heard in some Tantric literature.

Tantric world falls in 3 (three) Karantas each and having 64 Tantas. Vaishnukranta as described in some tantas as the land each of Vindhya Hills extending right upto Java. In the eastern part of India the Bengaliese who have most influence in South Asia are thoroughly intellectually with

novel ideas. Bangkok School penetrates into Cambodia and Bengala contributed a lot to its spirits to other lands.

In the domain of beliefs the similarities are unforgettable. It is hardly a co-incidence the very word Thai means to foretell. They tired to live in the past belief in the sources of good fortune house spirits Astrological calculations of protective talisman. There is a tradition in both that emulates both on necks are very powerful. Nothing was done without consulting the futures a out lazy day, fortune timing, for the letters and numbers.

The services of Hindu Brahman priests and spiritual master are always requisitioned for religious rifts in connection with laying a foundation stone inauguration of a new building or an Airport most of these things did not harm the Buddhist way of life in Thailand.

Beliefs connected with the gestation of Women and the birth of a Child. Truly, spirit of house, forest spirit and the play and spirits. Power of Phi Phri is Thai belief, Mainpuri in Loudrobi-Lamleha (Yeiti like creatures), to transport a passenger to an enchanted land for years are widely current in them.

IV. More Cultural Subjects

For the present, let us ponder on some cultural symbols which expressly confirm the affintily. Lotus is basic in the religion of both. In Buddhism the lotus is the symbol of self creation. In Vaishnava belief it is associated with Lok-Pita Brahma or Purajapati and Lakshmi. The Lotus motif is Hindu as well as Buddhistic.

It appears in sculpture and artistic object. According to Comar-Shwami the Lotus means the middle peace and basis of all manifestations. Thai made Lotus decorations are mainly found in the markets.

A decorative lotus form with petals is found in the sculpture and art object in Manipur. Reference to the same, its leaves and roots as scared objects occur in the lore of Kakching, Nongsaba. Irum Ningthou and Vaishnava literature of medieval period. The Irum Ningthou Sylvan deity of Kakching is hinted at his being swam in water of the lotus area known as Thamnapokpi which is the place where lotus leaves are grown abundantly in the water coming from the hills of Manipur. There are as many 3 places called Thamnapoki viz. near Koirengei, Pallel, and Naran sanya.

The conch (Moibung/Sankhya) occupies an important place in Mainpuri and Thai religious belief. The conch is used as an instrument of Puja/worship in both. The blowing of conch by a specialist is obligatory at the beginning of each rite. It is also used as a call of the people or giving communication to the people. Its sound is considered as auspicious and power is supposed to ward off evil spirits and possession of evil spirits to some one and enduring strength and consciousness. Conch is invested with holiness for religious purpose in Thai, ISKCON temple and other cultural places. The water from the conch should be respectfully received on the palm of the right hand and sprinkled on the head with devotion.

The association of the Thai as pertaining to the cult of Bamboos, Teaks use of caps prepared out of Paya (Bamboo pieces and nails), Yenpak (Umbrella prepared out of tree of leaves and bamboo nails), etc. has a semblance with work of the Meiteis and some Kukis of Churachandpur district of Manipur. These people are expert artists making all those for themselves.

Use of dhoti and Phurit Pumyat (a kind of white shirt worn by elderly made in ceremonial occasion are common in the dress of the people of South East Asia including the Manipuris, the Burmese and the Thais. The method of wearing lower garment for a young woman round the loin, the upper part of the body being kept bare, cutting the hair front in a straight fringe all around the forehead the side look and the back parts hanging loose-are a common features to both silk (Muga), cotton Basketry and other forms of handicrafts, embroidery and patterns (on account of Chinese influence) in both these hands seems a worthwhile academic pursuit.

Offering of Thakan (canopy of cloth or paper) and treating of elephant as the sign of royalty and respect of white elephants as the sole property of the King are deep rooted beliefs of these people.

There is strong partiality for number Chang (odd) for the Thai people and the Meiteis in connection with sacred offerings.

V. Common food habits

Food habits and fruits may also be brought into the picture. Such items as Ushoi (fermented bomboo, shoots), dried fish Ikaithabi, (Mimosa pudla) Waikhu (sea food/lobster), oyster, banana, etc. provide common food for both Aquatics like Thanging and lotus grow in both regions. A convincing evidences brought for both is ample and artistic use of plantation leave, plantain cups (Dona), plates, food covered by banana leaves in connection with religious feasts and carrying food packets. The same is common to both. Leaf, banana fruit, ear of banana having odd number when counted in pairs in the banana, stem of plantain tree, flowers etc. are highly valued in both, Laphu Iromba (banana flavoured with chillies) and dried fish necessary for every feast. Banana flower is used for preparing such delicious type of curries viz. Pakoura, Bora, Jhal, Roots of banana, etc. are used for the bamboo shoots in preparing uti (a curry prepared with lye). The powder of bamboo leaves after grinding when mixed with water may be applied at the injury caused by knife/dagger. The liquid can stop bleeding in any part of the body. Banana flower is used as an ailment against boil, and inflamed mucous membranes. Ripe banana fruit is an ingredient for preparing cooking feast, shak, meat and food curry. It is widely grown in hill and plain areas of Manipur valley. The tender portion of banana flower which is boiled in water may be taken as a mixture of fish curry. It is mixed with sugar and is taken like aluchip. The milk of banana acts as an ointment for all.

VI. Indoor games, Sports and Martial Arts.

Much more important than the above is in the realm of sports and martial arts. We understand from another source that the Thais are humorous and fun loving people. Kite flying and boxing are widely practised in Thailand. Like Meitei Thang Ta (Sword and spear dances), Khon, the mash dances of Thailand has linkage with martial arts. The indoor games of Kang is also a pastime with the Thais. The Mainpuri contribution in sports and martial arts have been asserted by the world at present. To the world, they give Polo and dance that go by the name of Mainpuri school of dancing. To them sword fighting, spear dance and wrestling in the traditional style would be commendable. They would try to find the enormous amount of money needed for the physical culture. At present the opening of state department to look into this fact is in the offing. The indoor game of dance, which is a favourite pastime with the people of all groups is common to both. The game is based on astronomy. The game as practised in Manipur is highly stylised and attractive. The Thai team who visited Manipur in 1987 saw this game being demonstrated by the players of Manipur.

VII. Common fruits, Orchids and animals

The interest in common flora and fauna has continued with the Botanists and Zoologists. It has been most refreshing to seek the common flora and fauna as they belong to a tropical region. Manipur shares with Thailand a strong affinity in having the following trees-Khognang (Po tree/Banyan), Theibong (Khanoon/Jack fruit), Heinou (Mango/Ma-Muang), Awathabi (Malakan/Papaya), Nawab (Pummato), Chingsu (Tonsak/Teak).

As for the fruits the following common ones deserve one's notice-Angur (Angune/grapes), Komla (Som-tra/orange), Yubi (Ma-phrao/coconut), Kihom (Sapporot/pine-apple), Nonggang hei (Lam-Yai/Nephelium Longan), Boroi (Phulsa/Jujuhi), Sita-phal (Noina/Sugar apple), Torbuj (Taingma/watermelon), Pungton (Farung/Guava), Lenchu (Linchi/Litchi), Mange (Makhan wan/sweet tamariand), Yongchak (Partia rox burghi), etc.

Orchids-The scientific study of Urei/Orchids provide a meaningful approach by proposing that they have many orchids in common. The two countries Manipur and Thailand have the following common orchids-Kongyamba Lai (Ucang Prai/Arundina, Graminifolia), Iyong Lei (Ueangea Hern/Denflrobiumafendibulum), Yerum Lei (Ueang Yao Gien/Dendrobium nobile), Samiji-rei (For tail orchid/Iyaret/Rhyncostylis Retusua), Kwaklei (Fa Mui/Vanda coerulea), and KwaKlei Nakuppi (Fa Mui Noi/Vanda coerulascens).

Sangai: Sangai/Brow antlered deer is found only in Keibul Lamjao near the Loktak lake in Manipur. The symbol of this animal form the crest on the Forest Department emblem, factors and publication. According to survey conducted by the Forest department its number is about 100 only at

present. It is the policy of the Government to save this species from extinction by different methods.

But the varieties of Sangal are found in states like Myanmar/ Burma, Thailand and Combodia. In the opinion of animal scientists, the close similarity of this animal style proven beyond any trace of about the close geographical common features and culture of these lands.

VII. Ceremonial nature of both the people

We aim at bringing into play some of the Thai thoughts and conduct viz. to regard the need as the highest part of the body and not to insult any creature on the head, to dress in a way that will not cause offence in any temples, removal of shoes when entering to any house or temple, greeting a people by joining the palm and inclining the Head, Addressing the people first by the given name and not by surname, respect shown to the elderly people and the monks-which bear a remarkable resemblance to the Meitei customs and practices like the Chinese both the Meitei and Thai consider the right hand to be more important than the left hand.

Concluding observation

In conclusion I like to emphasis the following points—

1. Going back through history, looking at the Thais and Meiteis it is evident that there had been infusion of Thai/Pong blood among the Chinese. The Thai stock falls into many branches like the Khamtis, Loas and the Shans. The relationship of Manipur with the Thai were more cordial than those of the Burmese. Some Meitei writers (like K.C. Tensuba etc.) are of the opinion that Meitei and Thai scripts were evolved out of the Chinese scripts on the strength of some common features but deeper research as needed on this issues.

2. The provisional government of free India set-up by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose in Singapore was the focal point of Indian's declaration of Independence. Thailand was one of the nine countries which gave recognition to the declaration of Indian independence during World War-II Indians of this generation in both these states (as also in South East Asian States) recalled with pride their association with Netaji, INA and the people of S.E. Asia more particularly about the Thai people.

3. The intermarriage of the Meitei with the Shans/Pong and merging of their descendants in the Meitei community cannot be ruled out as there were Pong rulers in Manipur before the reign of Pakhong-ba (Ist century A.D.) stay of 10 years by the Pongs under Shanglungfa in Pong Ingkhol (homestead land of the Pongs). There is also a route known as Pong Lambi (routes of the Pong people) in the eastern side of Imphal valley where ancient people used to go eastern countries via these routes.

4. Indian culture in the shape of Buddhism, Hinduism and Sanskrit in both these lands provided immortal cultured links between them. Indian culture was incorporated into the tradition and customs of these lands. The

primitive elements in their belief were common. Ramayana story as expressed in literature and Theatre Art and obeisance to Bharat Muni, author of the Natya Shastra, find their way into these lands.

5. Private bodies and associations must continue to deepen these bonds in the field of such knowledge as Archaeology, history, art, linguistics, flora and fauna.

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SANSKRITSATION OF MYANMAR

Introduction

I take the opportunity of expressing a few ideas on this topic. Calcutta was associated with Myanmar as it was ruled by the British from this capital. Myanmar was under the jurisdiction of Calcutta University. It is in the fitness of things that eminent scholars like Dr. S.K. Chatterjee, R.C.Majumdar, N.R.Ray, H.B.Sarkar and Sardar K.M. Pannikar made intensive studies on India's impact on South-East Asia politically and culturally. My observation is limited to this aspect as lived in Manipur State which is adjacent to Myanmar. I visited Indian side of Indo-Burman Border, boundary pillars, some parts of Burma towns and disputed Kabaw valley. It has not been possible to visit important cities although many Manipuris are still living as citizens of Myanmar. However I visited Refugee camps of Burmese Refugees opened in Manipur and met the students who are running helter skelter for their life under the Military Regime. I delivered my talks to them in their function being held in Imphal, studied Manipui MSS donated by the Manipuries of Burma and collected information from old persons who met and lived in Burma for some time. However my knowledge is like the drop of water in a hollow water tube when water has been poured through it.

Geographically considered it has an area of 677000 square kms in the shape of a diamond, a land of hills and mountains, valleys. Important rivers are the Irawady, Chindwin and Sittading river and which are famous for agriculture and population concentration on their banks.

Important racial groups are Kachin, Chin, Myanmar, Mon, Shans, Kayin and some mixed groups and foreigners. Before 1954 There were more than 4000 souls of Meities of whom 1/3 of then settled in Mondlay, cast of Irawady river. Being a union of many nationalities there are 50 national groups speaking 100 languages and dialects. The largest nationality is formed by the Myanmaris which comprises 68%. Other nationalities have their own states. Manipur had contacts with the Shans, Mons, etc.

Language

As for the language, the main official one is Myanmares/Burmese and recognised language for communication for all purposes. English is the second language. A great deal of attention is being paid to the preservation

of the culture, tradition and language along with political moves for separateness.

Religion

About 85% of the population comprising Myanmares, Shans and Karens are Buddhists while the rest are Christians, Muslims, Hindu and anemists. There are at present about 2000 Manipuries who followed Bengal Vaishnavism. They are of Manipuri origin and settled there since the 18th century.

Shan/Pong civilisation in its hey day was admirable in rice culture, fine arts and political expansion. The Vishnu image in Manipuri royal temple, some swords, urbrella-signs of royal insignia were presented to Manipuri King Kyamba by Khik Khongpha, king of Pong after their successful operation of Kyang Khampat, a tiny area in between Manipur and Burma.

The advancement of Indian culture in Mynmar

The history of the 2nd-9th centuries A.D. relates to Mynmar and South East Asian countries around the Bay of Bengal and pacific ocean. They were inhabited by such tribes, viz. Pyues, Mramma and Mons in Mynmar. There is an old and valid tradition that Indians went over to the states of Burma and Sanskritised them in different migratory waves. We hear much of sanskritisation processes about 2nd-3rd centuries by Indian traders, Artists in Tailang areas, Pagan areas, next wave in 4-6 century from Canjecvaram in Thailand and Indonesian Islands during the Gupta age. More important were the cultural waves in the 7th and 9th centuries when Brahmanism declined and there was resurgence of Buddhism of Theravada in Southern Burma and Northern Thailand under Mon influence. Another wave which deserves to be remembered in the wave from the eastern shore from the 9th to the 11th centuries under the influence of Pala kings in Eastern India.

We turn to Sanskritisation and Indianisation of Myanmar under Great Kings of indomitable energy viz. Anirudha better known as Anawartha and his son Kynjitha. They were responsible to maintain cultural relation with Indian through patronage of Indian monks from the Mon country and Thaton. Many Buddhists and Vaishnavas went from India and settled in Myanmar. The Burmese have many things in common with other States of Indian Union in cultural matters viz. Hindu and Buddhistic.

A university is called "Teka-tho (L)" which is Takasol which is a corruption of the word Taksha-shila or Takshila, a well known place in Pakistans Punjab about 7 miles away from Rawalpindi and Islambad. It was the biggest Buddhist University at one time. According to Buddhist concept the only place for Buddhist-University education is at Teka-thol (the L) is silent. Oath taking by a Burmese in a law court in a text known as "Kyan Sa" or "Chan-za" is in current use. This context contains the Vedas, the dharma sastras, the holy rivers, the Ganga, the Yamuna, the Saraswati and truth-speaking is but the blessing of the Devas and telling lies leads to the

condemnation to the hell of Yamaraj. This is but the expression of Hindu concept.

Vowels

The Burmans claim that their language developed out of Sanskrit or Pali, a child of Sanskrit which was referred to as the Magadhi language. Buddhist scripture i.e., the Tripitak was written in Pali-the language of the region of Magadha. The history of Shri Lanka and East Asian countries became almost the history of great translators of the Buddhists scripture/text in Various languages. What is common to them there is the spirit of devotion and reference towards the original sacred text, viz. Tripitaka, Jataka Kathas and Dharma pada. The State of Bihar was because the area with its capital Patna/Patliputra was full of Vihars-A Buddhist monastery. Nalanda University which was a few miles away from Patna played a substantial role in attracting students of Buddhist studies from the neighbouring countries of Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, etc.

The Burmans regard Panini as their Grammarian. Their grammar has the same words as Karta, Karma, Karan, Sandhi, Samas, etc. as in Sanskrit. The Burmese Matras for the vowels and addition of mantras to the consonant letters can be considered to be the specimen of Sanskrit/Hindi.

Mono-syllabic words-Burmese words represent a Tibeto-Burman language which is mono-syllabic. Basic Burmese words are of one syllable only. As for example, words: Sa (eat), ei (k) = sleep, Ka = dance, ne=sun, nya=night, taa= come. The rest of Burmese words with bi, tri or multi-syllable word it becomes a Pali or Sanskrit word.

Pure Burmese words are only 2000. The adoption of Pali or Sanskrit terms led to the enrichment of the same with vocables. The phonological and morphological characteristics can be noticed in such cases. Yahtaa = a carriage. It is derived from Pali word 'rath'. A Railway train is called Mee-yahtra i.e., fire-Ratha or agni Rath. Rangoon/Yangon is the capital of Burma. The word yan is "ran" which is of Pali origin which means a flight. Kon is a Burmese word meaning finish or end. Powerful King Alaungpaya of Shwebo defeated the Mon-talaings of Lower Burma in the 18th century and hence a treaty of friendship was concluded at a place called Yankon "the end of the fight." The British corrupted it into Rangoon.

Ka is written as with 2 circles joined but both of them opened at the bottom, Kh is written as with the circle opened on the left side but with an inward curve. Ga is written as with an opening at the bottom of a circle, etc.

Murdhina Ta group is read an Ta dha da, na. They have no sounds for danteno ta, dantena da, dandetena dha and Murdhina sounds.

The Myanmar speaking people-Mons, Burmese, etc. were reduced to writing by the intellectuals under Sanskrit and Pali influence. This has been coupled with a keen interest in cultural, religious affairs with the writing of Buddhist scriptures in Burmese characters. The Burmese method of writing mss, illustrations on Buddhism, alchemy and tantrism achieved an

outstanding reputation in the period before the Anglo-Burmese war and IInd world war.

There is strong tradition among the Manipuries that Prince Shyamsai, the eldest son of Maharaj Garibniwaj, the Bhakta of Hanuman, whose tantric and siddhi power was proverbial in the lips of everybody, outdid the Burmese sorcerers and alchemists in open competitions. He used to put on the dress of a Burmese Saya daw (Buddhist Monk) Phungy and performed many supernatural words in Burmese courts and villages.

The mysterious connection of Irawatic river, Ningthi rivers of Myanmar with the Ganges, conversion of the Manipuries into Vaishnavism and unearthing of skeletons and frontal lobe and cremation of the dead bodies on the banks of these rivers in Myanmar side were accomplished by the Manipuries by order of Maharaja Garibniwaz (1709-1749). The Burmese chronicles record the name of a Manipuri Brahmin who preserved the British authority, that the Manipuries would be preserved from all evil by drinking and bathing in the waters of the Irawathee river. The Manipuri Brahman's role in Sanskritisation process is to be treated as a reality of Hindu/Indian civilization and culture.

Miscellaneous Words

The system of counting 1-10 words are practically Indian words modified here and there. (1) Pratham into Pautama, Ti, (2) Dwitya into Dutiya, Ni (3) Tritiya into Tatiya, Ton, (4) Chaturtha into Sote(t) hat, le (5) Panchame into Pinsama, Nga, (6) Chhahtma into Saftama, sao, (7) Saptama into Thatma, Khuni, (8) Ashtma into Ahtama, Mik, (9) Navama into Navama, Ko and (10) Dama into Dathama, Tase.

Ta Ra in Sanskrit is changed into ya into Burmese

Rama into Yama	:	Pragya into Pyinya
Rana into Yana	:	Raja into Yaza
Ratha into Yatha	:	Prasad into Pyathada.
Rupa into Yo (p)	:	

Sa in Burmese is read as Cha in Sanskrit

Chit into Siet	:	Chaturtha into Sato(t) hta
Chhahtma into Sahtama	:	Chavan into Swam
Pancha into Pinsa	:	Kanchan into Kinsana.
Mapi	:	Mahi

Sha of Sanskrit becomes tha in Burmese

Sukra (Friday) into Thaukya	:	Shila into Thila
Samadhi into Thamadhi	:	Sharanam into Taranam
Kashyap into Kathapa	:	Surya into Thuris
Shasan into Thaathana	:	Shoonya into Thonya
Satya into Tissa	:	Sita into Tita
Ashram into Ayama	:	Senapati into Tenapati

Bhassa into Bathana	:	Shital(Cool) into Thida
Swabhav into Thabhava	:	Samudra into Thamodaya
Saman into Thaman	:	Dasham into Datham
Sankranta into Thinkranta	:	Dasha into Dotha.
Takshasila into Takasol/	:	Vippashyaya into Vippathan.
Tekathol (Teka-Thol)	:	(Meditation)
Akasha into Akatha	:	* Adhipali into Adipali/head of the state

Ang is read as Ing in Burmees

Mangel into Mingal	:	Bangal into Bingal

The Burmese were quite familiar with Indian Philosophical terms, viz. Kama, Krodha, Lobha, Moha, (with some modifications), Nirvana, Ayr, Mudra, Purush, Prakriti etc. The notion of meditation has been reinforced by the Burmese School of Vipassana/meditation.

Young students monks, writers on Abhidharma and modern Scholars study the Abhidharma (excellently). The germs of Buddhist thought are well-knitted in this part of Tripikaka.

Myanmar has been known for its scholarly studies in Tripiataka especially the Abhidharma. Scholars and layman alike took great pains in Studying the manuscripts, Myanmar can boast of 3 or more printing presses where Pali Books are printed. The translations of the whole of Tripitaka text of Pali language in Burmese characters have been completed by the Buddha Sasana council. Sanskritisation includes Pali in wider connotation. Pali is coming from valli meaning garlands or series against Hindu books written in Sanskrit. But a section of Mahayani Buddhists consider Sanskrit to be their own and a host of Sanskrit Buddhist writers, produced Sanskrit books of Buddhalogy. The value of Buddhist Sanskrit literature had their implications and historic necessities inspite of their mistakes. In Burma Brahmanism of the Vaishava and Shaiva types and debased form of tantrism was very popular in early centuries, of Christian era. Dr.R.C.Majumdar claims to have found evidence of this veine about which he wrote them in p.72 of his book namely Ancient Indian colonization in South-East Asia. ``It appears moreover that both Hinayana and Mahayansa and even Tantrik form of Buddhism prevailed in Burma in addition to Theravada. A number of images both Brahmanical and Buddhist have been found in Burma. These prove that both Saivism and Vaisnavism were known, but the latter seems to have been in great favour."

It may be noted that the birth of ISKCON movement associated with Prabhupada become conspicuous by rapid increase of devotees in many countries of the world viz. Britain, U.S.A., Rome, Japan, Hongkong, Thailand, etc. at present, In Mayanmar as in other parts emphasis upon be Gaudiya scriptures, devotional practices in ISKCON temples and way of Vaishnava life, assumption of Indian names by the devotees, Saffron robes and sacred marks in different parts of the body may be identified as a successful Sanskritisation in Myanmar.

Burmese astrology and astronomical Calendar An appraisal in relation to Sanskrit influence

Sanskritisation process though this aspect deserves to be remembered. Manipur has been a mainly Hindu Vaishnava country ever since the 17th century. We find many positive evidences that Hindu astrological ideas found entrance in a large part of Burmese Court and of the population through Manipuri Pounas (Punya) Brahman who practised astrology. For one thing Burmese capital was not far from Manipur side via the hill routes and the Mainpuri astrologers trained in Sanskrit and Bengali treaties used to live and earn income in Mynmar side by this practise. Mainpuri war captives found new home in the court of Ava Kings and enriched the cultural life by their planetary calculations, rituals and results after peeking into the future by means of stars.

A calendar in Burmese language is called Pyeka-dein. This is Paksha (Pakh) din/day. The month begins with the first day of the waxing moon (Purnima) and ends on the last day of the waning day (amavasya). They observe Pancha-Sheel on full moon day (Purnima), the first half moon day (amavasya) and on the eighth day of waxing and waning (the two astamis). These are scared days for them and all shops are closed on these days. The import and meanings of the week are much the same. The import and meaning of the days of the week (Mangal or Angarika = Inga or Anga in Burmese; Buddha or Wednesday = Badhahu in Burmese; Brihaspati or Thursday = Kyatha-pade or Kaspate in Burmese; Friday or Sukra = Thaukya and Saturday or Sanivar = soni in Burmese). The scientific background rashis/zodiacal sign, addition of one lunar month after every three years for conforming lunar year with the solar year Sankrant is corrupted into thinkrant or thingyan by them (entry of the sun in each Rashi). Maha Sankranta/Mahathigyan falls on the Vaisakhi day. It is believed that Thagya-men, the God of rain descends to the earth at a time astrologically calculated and he came to his abode after 2 or 3 days. During the period of his early visit the Burmese play holi/water festival with clean water (no coloured water).

As for the systems of Indian Jyotish system, viz.-Surya Siddhanta principles, terms and words, the Burmese are deeply indebted to Indian systems. Among the terms we came across mention can be made of Logan (Lagna), or Le, Ravi (sun) or Ne, Seenda (from Chandu or Chandra) or La for the moon, Naknataya (from Nakshtras) for the constellations, etc. The stars are also called taya.

Burmese children are named after the day they are born. As for examples persons born on Saturday are given names beginning with letter 'na' which means Saturday. U. Ne win and U.N.U. are saturday born. Date is called Ye(k) or tithi. The natural calendar for them is framed after the pattern of the Sakya calendar called The (K).

History is known as Yaza-win to the Burmans. Yaza is derived from Raj or Raja, win is a shortened from of Vansha which is corrupted into

Wantha. History is basically the story of the Rajvansha. Even a minister is called Win-gyi in Burmese language since ministers in old days belonged to the King's vomsa or clan.

The Magadhi word taw (a suffix for royalty or priests) has come into use in Burmese because of the impact of Buddhism. But it was read as daw. A learned scholar is known as asariya-daw or Saya-daw (from Acharya taw). A Buddhist monk is respected as soyadaw. Similarly a palace is called Nan-daw. The suffix daw as adopted by the Burmese is actually taw of Magadhi. The Burmese Buddhist monks by their learning and spiritual works won them the title of Phengvi or pungri (by the Meiteis) which means a great or spiritually powerful person. The same is supported by Indian tradition.

Religious words and terms

Being Buddhists the Myanmaris are following the basic teachings of Lord Buddha viz. 4 noble truths (catvari aryas-satyani) and eightfold path which leads to the cessation of misery which is concerned with the control of the conditions of misery. The eightfold path consists of 8 steps, i.e., Sama-vaca/vachan (Right speech), Samaw-Kamantha/Karma (Right conduct), Samama-aziva/ajiva (Right livelihood), Samma-vayama/vyayam/Pumshartha (Right effort), samma-sati/sati or chetna (Right mindfulness), Samma-tamadi/Samadhi (Right concentration), Samma-Sankappa/Sankalpa (Right remove) and Samma-dihti (dristhti). Well-understood Buddhist principles are practised and praised in their life although there were some corruption's in pronunciations. One such local saying is reflected in such readings or pronunciations-Borddam Taranam Gissami, Dhamam Taranam Gissami, Thanga Tarnam Gissami. A phongye (phongye) is man with a monastic life or the one who practise the Buddhist rules of Vinaya Pitaka.

The phongyis are confined to the monasteries during Varsha Ritu/ Rainy season (Wazi uto in Burmese) and should the code days be so meditative as to master the sutra and Abhidhamma pitakas. The spirit of this rule is that no preaching is practicable in the sadhana (Thadin) period which ends in October and this meditation is released in the next month (thadinkyut) where the monks go out of the monasteries for alms. The festival presents an attractive feature that the Burmese observe their Diwali on the full moon day in October (before 15 days of Hindu Diwali) and observe another festival of light on the full moon day which occurs in November called Taza-nung-mon (i.e., after 15 days of our Diwali). It is the brightest festival of the whole year.

A Buddhist monk who allowed a certain status is known as Arhat which comes from the word Ari-hant, i.e., one who has killed his Ari (enemies like rag, lobh, moh and dwesh). This word is also pronounced and written as Yahen and when the suffix daw is added to it means Yohan-daw. The practice of using Sanskrit words viz. rag, lobh, moh, chit, karem,

mangal, svar, dharma, etc. with some changes appear to have been in current usage in the Buddhist and Hindu periods of its history. The story of Jatakas, Buddhi satva, adi Buddhas , etc. are frequently discussed with devotion and conviction in Buddhist cultural life of the Burmese.

The Burmese Buddhist caught hold of the problem and message of Indian culture (with special reference to Buddhism) through use of about 100 religious words of Sanskrit and Pali origin. The value of Sanskrit language and philosophy is very great indeed when we see and read the motto of Rangoon University thus "Natthi Vizza Thaman Dhanam" which means: "Vidyake Samaan Koi dhan nahi (n) hai" i.e. There is no wealth like education/knowledge/wisdom. Words such as Ong (Om), Ko(Kokh), Ayam (ashram), Naibban (Nirban/freedom), gave Dokkha (Dukha), Vaisnava vocabularies along with the ordinals gave a new aspirations to them.

Royal names

Certain religious and social observances are found in the Mon inscriptions. It is to be noted that Sanskrit was considered sacred by a sect of Buddhism as its sacred language in Burma of early times. Brahmanism was the force for the Sanskrit element as recorded in the Mon records of Burma.

New evidence in the Pong Kingdom (a Shan State) and Manipuri tradition as recorded in the series of Vijaya Panchalis mentions the worship of Vishnu by the Pong rulers in the form of salagram/fossils covered with Sankhya, Chakra, Goda and Padma (Conch, disicmace and lotus by 4 hands and riding on Garuda, the vedicle of Vishnu worship of Shri Vishnu and cult of associating it with the rulers/Kings as sign of royalty were inseparably linked in the 15th century in Manipur and Shan States of Burma.

Coming to modern period we may refer to the writing of Gita Rahasya, a Bible of modern Indian Nationalism, and a learned commentary on the Gita during his stay in Mondalay jail in Burma. He caused to finish this great work by overcoming the stringent prison regulation of Monday Jail. The Kinship between the birth of Shri Krishna in the top prison of Kamsa's Mathura and the birth of Gita Rahashya in the Mondlay Jail under British Regime and its tremendous impact and appeal on the Hindu mind was too apparent to be ignored by a researcher. The aspen and the banyan trees planted by him still stand to his vibrations and memories.

Language and Literature

Present Mynamar is known as Brahmadesh or Land of Agni in Sanskrit literature. Later it is also called Ratnapur and Subranabhumi. It is called Awa leipak (country of Avas) by the Manipuris and Burma by the British at the time of their annexation and conquest. It was a part of Indian cultural empire although it was never an administrative unit before the British. However it is attempted to prove and identify that it was the land of

Homsadwaja Maharaja and became a subdued state under the sway of the Pandavas during the Raj Suya sacrifice of Maharaja Yudisthira.

Racially the Burmans belong to the group of Tibeto-Burmans. It is thought that they migrated from Tibet through Nepal, Bhutan and Assam. By Burmese language we generally mean the language of the people who inhabit the fertile Irawaddy valley of Irawaddy river. Mention can also be made of other ethnic groups viz. the karens, the Mon-Taleing, the Shans, the Chins and the Arakanese. The Mon-Taleings smack of Indian cultural influences in many stories which may have many Indian parallels for morality and entertainment. Classical literature has been dominated by Buddhist literature and Hindu Brahmanical literature of early times. Sanskrit literature is preserved in many inscriptions found in different parts of ancient Mon Kingdom.

The Alphabets and scripts under Anirudha/Anawartha. The Burmese adopted Pali script of India. Dr. R.C. Majumdar observes as follows-" . . . . all the systems of writing that we find in use to day in different parts of South East Asia from Burma to Java originated from the Brahma scripts of India. The local modifications followed more or less in the same way as we find in different parts of India . . . . . "The alphabet follows the sound and the sequence of Sanskrit alphabet i.e., ka, kha, ga, gha, etc. But the mode of writing is somewhat different. In old days it was written with square alphabets like the Tamils, Telugus, Kannadas and Malayalam. About the 13th century the intellectuals invented a more scientific and artistic method of writing the alphabets by rounding them in the shape of circles. Burmese writing is all circles and the letters are made by opening the wides on various different positions.

There are some slight variations in Burmese pronunciations. Cha is written as Sa in Burmese. Ra becomes Ya in it. Sa becomes tha. Suriya of Hindi is read as Thuniya in Burmese.

Extent of influence on Burmese Life

As I could see from my visit and hearing from experienced people, I am personally impressed by the Indian custom of the village people wearing head gears of longsheets of cloth round the heads in Shan states. Each village has a temple of the guardian deity with a flag pole crowning its tall spire. The elders of the village under the leadership of the most senior resident receive honoured guests at the village boundary. The village assembly hall also serves as the guest house. Woman from the community guest house serve food to the guests brought from their homes in decorated wooden trays. This practice reflects India's concept of enjoining on every householder to treat the guest as a God.

As a visitor and stranger, I was entertained with jaggery, boiled tea and orange at the shop cum household in the Tower city by the Burmese household.

After enshrining a desired image of Buddha it is a feature in Burmese cultural life. Indian culture in the shape of Buddhism and Hinduism

endured in the Burmese/Myanmars a strong sense of Indian (in broad Hindi meaning) which promotes its culture despite some modern trends.

Sanskritisation in names of place and towns

Buddhism disappeared from India but its culture had been preserved in Burma and South East Asian countries. Another method which the Burmese took over these centuries is the method of Sanskritising places and towns. Some Sanskrit orientialists pointed out that the very name Burma (Mynmar) was because it was the land of Brahma (Agni) in Hindu Epic times. It is also a Shortened form of Brahmadesh (land of God Brahma boarding on the Brahmaputra (daughter of Brahma). Often one may go to towns and places and identify corrupted Burmese places with Sanskrit and Pali names. There is no dearth of survivals in place names. We can pick these words which were associated with important Hindu events such place names and temples as Sulamari, Ananda, Mahamuni, Tatnapur, etc. have been explained as being of Sanskritised expressions of famous Pagodas. The following names became accepted among the people during the pre-British times. Sanskritisation was effected in this process —

Yan-gon Ran-(fight) + kon (places)

Mondlay from Mandal (central)

Moulmein from Mayur mein, Town of peacock

Okkalapa from Utkalav (old name of Orissa)

Theri-kshetaya (modrn Prome)	-	Shri Kshetra (si-sit) after Jaganath Puri in Orissa
Aung-Zeya (so gains)	-	Aung in Burmese means victory. Zey comes from Jay or Jaya in Pali
Amarapura	-	Amar-pur
Zepawoddy	-	Jay-wali
Pagon (Pok-kon)	-	Coming from pusp-Kan Puspa means flower, Kan means bunk

Mondlay area is called Yatna-bhoumi which means Ratna-bhum Lower Burma or whole of Burma was called Thuwunna-bhoomi which means swarn-bhumi

Irrawadi(Irawat)-Name of Indra's white elephant. The poetic imagination is that Irawaddy river flows out of the trunk of the elephants which are found in abundance on the bank of the river as its source.

Salvun	-	Shravan nadi: There is a town called Takaw in Shan States beyond Kengtung on the bank of the Salvun river. The people imagine that this is the piece of land where Rama's father Dasarath killed Sharvan.
Chindwin	-	This river is called Chandra Prabha in Bengali and Ningthi (niece) by the Manipuis. The Mainpuris named Chindwin as the Ningthi or beautiful river-a term descriptive of the estimation in which they hold it.

Mejit-nge river :	Sanskrit expression is called Do(k)hta-wati which means Dashta-wati.
Mekong river - Yodaya	from Ma Gong or Ma Ganga. Thailand/Siam is known as Yodoya (a corrupted word from Ayodha) by the Burmese. Ayothaya was the ancient capital of Thailand from 1350 to 1767. After destruction of Ayodhaya in the 18th century by a Burmese king Bangkok became the new capital of Thailand. The Sanskrit/Thai name for Bangkok is Krung Teb which is Gram-Deva. It was the heart of the Thai State for 350 years.

Names of persons

Siddhartha Gautama is better known as Buddha after his enlightenment; Sakyamuni or the wise man of the clan of Shakya.

According to the custom of the Burmese Buddhists every person is obliged to enter the Thanga (Sangha) at least once in his life time. This ceremony is similar to Hindu Upanayana or Yagyopavit in which the novice shaves his head and joins the monastery or gurukul of his master. There he learns the three R's and dhamma. Like the Brahmacharya stage he lived on alms which he collects every morning at 5 a.m. from the local villagers or the town people. He assumes a new name which is a pali name, e.g. U. Pryinva (Pragya), U. Wuntha (Wonsha), U. Nyana (Gyan), U. Tezaw (Tej).

The Burmese King assumed two names, one Pali/Sanskrit name and a Burmese name sometimes. The Burmese court assimilated many Hindu Vaishnava practices under the influence of Manipuri Pounas (Punya)/Brahamans. The Vaishnava ritual of pouring water over the head of the king by the Brahmans at the time of coronation was performed as an important item. Thus we notice that important king i.e. Anurahtha of Pagan was Anuradha. Narathi Pate was Nar-Singh-Pati. In Burmese Singh becomes Thiha meaning Lion.

Alaungpaya/Alaungphaya established his rule over the whole of Burma in the 18th century. It is a sanskritisation of Burmese expression-Alaung is a Burmese word meaning body. Phaya means lord or old. This word appears in Sanskrit as Bhura which means Lord or Protector. Bha becomes PH and ra becomes ya and the word is corrupted into Phaya which means Lord Buddha and not god in the strict sense. Manipuri word Phura/temple is a corrupated form of Phaya.

Buddhist Law

Buddhist Burmese Law is the customary law of the Burmese Buddhists. Dhamma that of the Buddhsit is influenced by Hindu Dandanitis. A commentary of the dhamma that in Burmese is called the Manu-kria/Manu Kvoi. Marriage and divorce are contractual rather than

sacramental. It is the agreement and written deed and not be ceremonial aspect which had the legal validity.

Marriage is called Le (t)-hla (t) mingla. Le (t) means hands, hta (t) is joining. Mingla is mangal. Ear-boring ceremony is called naa-that. In Manipuri it is naa-hupta which is karna-vissedna. The authoritative law text reformed to Wagaru Dharma that in corporate, 18 branches of law from Chapter (VIII) of the Manusomrita. King Wagaru (1208 AD) of Martaban promulgated it. Its authority spread over different regions of Myanmar. Later texts, based on the Manusmriti such as Dhammavilash, Dhammasathha Manu-yin, Manusara-Shwe-myin, etc. were also complied. Manusmriti was seriously cultured in Burma and other south-East Asian countries.

Inscriptions

References can be made to Hinduinised Mon inscriptions in Southern Burma from where we got the information about the Brahmans, castes, worship of Narayan and use of sacred puja materials, viz. white rice, sugarcane and Banana. Their old capital was modern Prome. Archaeological remains here points out that Thervada Buddhism with Pali was introduced also by the 5th centuries by Indian missionaries from South India. Old kingdom of Pyues known as Shri Kshetra (named after Jaganath Kshetra) was the centre of Hinduism with images of Hindu gods like Brahma, Ganesha, Vishnu, Hansa, birds, etc. Modern Pegu was called Hamsavati.

Images of Buddha, relics and Pali inscription of Gupta Brahmi script near Rangoon, golden scrolls with passages from Vinaya and Abhidhama near golden Prome, Sanskrit inscription of the South Indian script of the 7th century at Pagam show beyond any trace of doubt about the successful sanskritisation. Among the books donated to the library of a monastery are Nyaya-bindu and its commentary, Hetu bindu and its gloss and simplification and Mahakalachakra and its commentary.

In Pagan there was a temple modelled after the style of Buddha Gaya temple. On the outside, on the southern wall of the temple is the figure of Hanuman. There is a Hindu temple called Nat-Hlang-Kyaung where there are figures of ten avatars of Vishnu; but now not much of it remains. They have been destoyed by Japanese bombing and passage of time.

Manipuri role in Sanskritisation process

We are informed that Dhwajaraj, the king of Manipur of the Sakya clan conquered the Ava country/Burma and established a Hindu kingdom before Christ. The Dravids settled in parts of Lower Burma via the sea route of Bay of Bengal. The Trilanga or Talaings were for all purposes the people from Telangana District in the Deccan mixed with local persons had contact with important centres of Buddhism viz. Amaravati and Nagajuna-konda. These Mon people followed Theravada Buddhism and developed a culture superior to that of the people from North Burma. From Prome to Manipur

valley there was a highway. The Manipuri people were acquainted with a people known as Telangas, probably a corrupted form of the Talaings of Lower Burma. The Mon people brought about the political disintegration and ruin of the Tungoo dynasty of upper Burma in the 18th century. It is to be remembered that Maharaja Garibniwaz of Manipur (1709-1748) repeatedly weakened the Tongo kingdom by his wars and demonstrated the weakness before the world.

Maharaja Garibniwaz was a powerful king who patronaged the Bhagavata cult of Bengal and of Ramanndi cult from Sylhet. From the Manipuri chronicles namely Garibniwaz charit compiled by Dwija Sitaram Sharma we know that king Garibniwaz followed the Chakra Vyuha style of making fort and took with him a flag of white cloth with the figure of Hanuman drawn on it. Many Brahman astrologers called Ponna from Manipur went to Burma and controlled the cultural and spiritual life of Burmese court by their astrological calculations and predictions. A Manipuri Brahman Astrologer named Jibananda Thakur laid the foundation stone of Kamudo Pagoda in the 16th century. The purpose behind his raid and wars with the Tungo kings was to avenge the unceremonious attitude of the Burmese king to his younger sister Chapko Makho Ngambi. He was directed by his father in the death bed. According to Burmese account the invasion took place as the Manipuries were advised by the Brahmans that they would attain blessedness if they took a dip in the Irawaddy river at Sagaing. In fact the warriors took bath in their spare moments.

Under Ramandi influence King Garibniwaz introduced the practice of cremation and bone gathering ceremony of the dead persons by a royal decree on 26th February 1724 he had the ceremony of dropping of skulls for dead persons in the Ningthi River of Myanmar.

We are told by Burmese sources and British records that the Manipuries enriched the Burmese cultural life by performance of Vaishnava Rasa lila, preparation of horoscopes in Sanskrit and performance of Puja in important matters. The Manipuri Vasti/colony in them worshipped many Vaishnava gods in the temples and the Brahmans cultured many texts of Sanskrit and Bengali on Rath Yathra, Janmastami, sacred Kartika month, etc.

Conclusion

The author has offered the following concluding observations on the above address.

(1) Indian influences in South East Asia with special reference to Myanmar, Thailand, Bali, etc. was on religious, cultural, social and philosophical and thereby leading to the creation of a new civilization in these lands. Indian impact on far East, China, Mongalia and in areas where Chinese civilization was dominant. Indian influence was mainly on religious and philosophical ideas and not on Social/Cultural Institutions.

Indian impact was great and laid the foundation of new civilization in South East Asia. But the genius of the local people that gave to their civilization, particular contents and form, their own characteristics and qualities are to be emphasised by all. Burmese characteristics and features are something which are not mere reflections of India in Art, Literature and culture.

(2) By Sanskritisation we mean in a broad civilization/Indianisation process through Hindu, Buddhist and modern Indian Renaissance associated with personalities like Mahatma Gandhi, Lokmanya Tilak, etc. This process is still incomplete. The Myanmaries are to study, Indian's ahimsa culture and Gandhiji's techniques for resolving their inner conflicts and solving political problems.

(3) Words like Ava, Awa, Kabow, Pongs and Burma are used to mean the land or the people of modern Mynamar. Cheitharol Kumbaba, the most authoritative palace Diary mentioned the Burmans as the Khamarans (Khemr) in 1503. The Manipuries, the British and the Chinese referred to unified Burma as Ava which was the capital of Burma since the time of Thanlun (1629-48) and continued to be the capital for quite a long time. The Manipuries named Burma as Awa which was derived from Ava.

According to Dr. R.C. Majumdar, the name Burma is derived from Mramma (Indanised constituent tribe) one of the powerful tribes. In 1979 the name Burma was changed into Myanmar by the Government and since then the tirm Burma has been replaced by Myanmar in all official records and Govt. publications. The very word Myanar means great or predominant. It is used in the sense of swift moving in some circles.

In my opinion the word is also a corruption of the word Mramma which we have discussed earlier. In changing the names the Military Government set for the authentic political military and diplomatic standpoint to solve the political crisis through their regime.

(4) In the pre-1985-86 situation, some Hare Krishna consciousness centres were established in some parts of Myanmar by the followers of Prabhupada with the mass intentions of popularising the message of Chaitanya Vaishnavism in the world. A greater chance was for the Myanmarise converts to live a life of a Bhakta, to adopt Indian names, dress and mode of eating, hence a deeper interaction with Indian art and aesthetics.

Notes and References

1. For a full description of the Manipuri contribution to Myanmar culture vide my chapters-in connection with Manipuri astrology and Astronomy. Also my article published in **Manipur Past and Present,** Vol. IV ed. by Dr. Naorem Sanajaoba Singh of Gauhati University, Law Department.
2. It is the text of speech delivered by me (Dr. M. Kirti Singh) at the Asiatic Society, Calcutta on 10-1-1995. The function was presided over by Dr. Prof. Ram Ranjan Mukherjee, an eminent Sanskritist of West Bengal. The

speech was heard by the Linguists, Historians, Sanskritists and Antholoprogists of Calcutta Jadavpur, Vishwa Bharati and Ravindra Bharati Universities. Some new points grew out of the learned questions, comments and observations of the participants. They are incorporated in this paper.

3. Vide also a speech delivered by me as the President of Archives week celebration-State Level on 25-11-94 at the Govt. Archives Office, Porompat.
4. Field works conducted by me by visiting the Indo-Myanmar Border areas and Moreh and other trade free zones from 1973 to 1995. To Manipur Brahman pilgrims/tourists from Mandlay (including one Bwnbe driver) arrived in Imphal on 19-4-96. K Surdargopal Sharma/uthung Shar 53 years old the terms. He and their 4 old ladies went from Imphal to Nabadwip by plane for religious purpose. The rest stayed in the Dharmasala near the palace loisang under the leadership of B.H. Babudon Sharma/utei Ao 39 years old. Most of them are Brahman girls who had education in English. They speak Manipuri language rarely. They are more conversant in Burmese language. I met them on 18-4-96 and 19-4-96 and tell to them about their lives. I provided a copy of my book to them.
5. Mitkap Thokpa (a quarterly journal) ed. by N. Thambal, July-Sep. 1996 issue provide photos and pictures of Manipuri life in its pages. It is being published from 4, Kathal Bagan, Dhanmondi, Dhaka, 1205 Bangaladesh.

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HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RELATIONS BETWEEN NEPAL AND INDIA IN THE LIGHT OF SANSKRIT TEXTS AND MISSIONARY RECORDS AND DIARIES

Introduction

The glamour of European Civilisation, achievements of U.S.A. and Japan attracted the attention of all and the world for us implies nothing beyond U.S.A., Europe and Japan. The countries in our neighbourhood with which even in most distant times we had maintained steady relations, political, commercial and above all cultural are not properly attended to in spite of great difficulties of communications. To remember afresh the links with our neighbour is one of the brightest episodes of man's cultural development in Asia. Nepal shares with India and long history stretching back into antiquity.

The paper is an attempt to touch upon Indo-Nepal historical and cultural relations on the following points for discussion : (1) Cultural scene, (2) Historical and political perspectives and (ii) Missionary attempts from India/Darjeeling. I am at obtaining historical truth on the basis of documents and available sources.

(I) Aspects of Cultural relations

Both India and Nepal bear the imprint of the Himalayas in politics, religion, mythology, art, and literature. Nepal is culturally and religiously within the sphere and web of Hindu India. In it are remains of Hinduism, Buddhism and animism/primitive Tibetan traditions. The Terain region contains Lord Buddha's birthplace, Janakpuri, the city of Janak Rajarishi. Patan is founded by Emperor Asoka at the time of visiting Lumbini Garden. But Hinduism dominated the land under the rulers and dynasties ranging from the Lichchvis from Bihar, Karnataka Kings from the Deccan, etc. The rulers brought priests and Hindu practices with them. Communities of Indo-Aryan origins are largely settled in the Terai region, the lower hill areas in far western Nepal and valley of Kathmandu. Most of the Mongolian communities are of Tibetan derivation. There are several communities which are of mixed origins.

Hinduism is the religion of the ruling classes. Buddhism in the northern region is allied to Lamaistic Buddhism but in the south it smacks of Hinduism. There are many instances where figures of Buddha are found in Hindu temples and figures of Shiva in Buddhist shrines. Myths connected with the origin and formation of Kathmandu valley have Buddhistic and

Hindu versions. Vishnu or Buddhi sattwa drained out the lake and made it habitable. Nepali legends and myths are based on Hindu Puranas, epics and cults of medieval India. Buddhist tantric saints like Minanath and Machchendra nath are respected by the Nepalis, Hindus and Buddhist alike. Hinduism had grown in influence during the later periods. Sacred places such as Pasupati nath, Changu Narayan, etc. attracted Indians. Hindu sacred treasures like Salagram stone of Nepal, Pagoda style temples have made Nepal so attractive and valuable to India. Like Buddhism of the 10-13th century Bengal, the cult of Guru is wide spread among the Newars and the Gurkhas. The saligrama Sila embodiment of Vishnu is found in the river Gandaki in Nepal about 140 miles from Khanthmandu.

Sanskrit has close associations with Hindu religion and Indian Philosophy. Many documents and stone inscriptions of religious importance are in Sanskrit. It was the court language. Government notice were issued in Sanskrit in ancient and medieval period. Without Sanskrit other languages such as Newari and Nepali cannot be understood in proper perspective. National archives of Nepal has an extensive collection of Sanskrit mss, documents and inscriptions. It has been the centre of higher Sanskrit learning for scholars.

It is well to remember that Nepali (the official language) has strong affinity with Rajasthani and Kumaouni language. Its script is Devanagri. Several works from the earliest time till the present age are still lying in the National Archives, local Libraries or with individuals.

Indian cultural influence has been predominant in the social and cultural life of Nepal. The ruling dynasty in the Kathmandu valley had invited Brahman priests from India to come as ministers and teachers in the court. Under the Brahmanic influence Nepali society has been structured on the lines of Hindu society. They have accepted the ruling family as of the Kshatriya caste, but the Brahmanas told the king that he must accept the counsel of the Brahman priests. The king derives his legitimacy to govern from his being the incarnation of Vishnu, the preserver of Hindu Trinity. This is much the same today. Nepalse education is modelled on traditional Indian education, and its arts viz. painting, music, architecture, dance, etc. have been strongly influenced by Indian arts. Indian radio and films are part of Nepalese life in Nepal itself.

Viewed from the stand point of culture Nepal is India writ small although some non-Hindu social attitudes and values are still prevalent in it, even within communities that have adopted Hindu custom and manners. All Chinese leaders agree on the subordinate and tributary status of outlying territories of Chinese border. Britain's, they maintained, took Burma/ Myanmar, Bhutan, Nepal and Hongkong. They dreamed of subduing Tibetans, Mongolians and Muslims to form the Pan-Hanist China. At present Chinese culture and ideology are not remote to Nepal.

(II) Historical and Political Relations-from Diplomacy-to co-operation.

Hindu Kingdom of Nepal have had connections with Kashmir, Kanuj, Himachal Pradesh, Ujjain, Delhi and Kamarup/Assam. It tries to acquire the Hill of Darjeling from the King of Sikkim. These mountains were heavily forested and lightly populated. Tea plant developed a large number of people from eastern Nepal who came and worked in the tea estates. Thus through trade, tea, farming and later the army, a sizeable number of Gurkhalis (or Nepalies) have come to be residents in different parts of India especially the Darjiling district of West Bengal. By stages it has become the issue of the Gurkha homeland movement under Subas Gishing.

Nepal is the only part of Indian subcontinent which resist the British domination and made a friendly, diplomatic and free country necessary to the British administrators. The Gurkha regiments helped the British in suppressing revolts in British India Wise statesmen like Jung Bahadur Bhimsen, etc. who grasped the significance of the British power as other Indians of their times to did saved the situation Indian states fall are by one like the ripe fruits..

Era of Co-operation

Political history has been disturbed since the withdrawal the British from Indian sub-continent in 1947. It drew inspiration from the Indian National movement and opposition to the hereditary Prime Ministership of the Ranas had succeeded in overthrowing it with the support of the Government of India.

The legitimate rulers of Nepal, the Shah family was rest to power with the King as the constitutional monarch. It is said that Dr. Rammanohar Lohia of India initiated the movement of the people against the Ranas of Nepal. Indian Govt. extended aid to its economic planning experiments, projects, education and scheme. The two countries lived not as other groups, but noble and dependable neighbours, glorifying in their helps, maintaining the in course of culture, diplomacy as the one whose foundations were long ago, laid by our forefathers with vision.

A Note On Nepal's Relation With Manipur

About 100 years ago, East India Company stationed gurkha in Langthabal and residency area of Imphal. After 1891, Anglo-Manipuri war started. British Reserve area was occupied by the soldiers. Many Gurkha officials and their families settled in the area. There are no written records of their arrival and migration to Manipur. The Meteis/Manipuries have the same physiological feature as the Nepalis/Gurkhas. They specialise in rearing cows, preparing milk stuffs poultry works and there were many food products in Meitei and tribal communities which even are in daily use. This community started tea-shop, agriculture and milk trade established in Manipur.

There are some facts we should know that Manipur had good relations with the royal family of Nepal. Bodhachandra Maharaj married Iswari Devi Princess, the eldest daughter of Prince Ramraja of Ramnagar in Calcutta on June 18, 1941 and made her the queen of Manipur on 1st April 1942. She happened to be the cousin of His Majesty Maharajadhiraja, the King of Nepal and grand-daughter of His Highness, the Prime Minister of Nepal. Brigadier Kali Bahadur of the royal Nepal Brigade, who was the cousin of the Maharani reached Manipur to help the British in 1942. Ban on the slaughter of cows by the British for beef which had been mentioned since the opening of political Agency in Manipur in the official files remained active during the Second World War. Scholars and the officials of Manipur began by a study of Hindu scriptures and objected violently to the slaughtering of cows by the British and American troops during the war in matters of war effort. Disputes between the British authority and the Manipuri Vaishnavas followed of such ferocity that Brigadier Kali Bahadur supported the Maharaj and the Maharani, the Indian Nepali princess against the British and opened fire on British troops at the time of cow-slaughter in front of the Nepali troops. The Viceroy, Governor of Assam and Political Agent of Manipur were surprised by the stand and arguments of the Maharaja and his subjects and the issue was solved by the withdrawal of the British for killing cows. We do find the connection between Manipuri and Nepali culture for the defence of Hindu religion and belief.

The Nepali community now settled in Manipur (Imphal, Pukhao, Kanglatongbi, Kangpokpi, Supar Meina, Tamenglong Hill district, etc.) enroched Hindu culture and contributes significantly to Manipur's multinational society. Nepali culture penetrated into the most remote areas of tribal areas and Indo-Myanmar border sides. Hindu temples in these areas attracts the worshippers. They did not face antagonism from the people since they acted as Chowkidars and plantation works in hill districts and jungles. Even now they are not virtually severed from Nepal and Sikkim. Nepalis born in Manipur looked upon India/Manipur as their homeland. In recent years they are penetrating higher education and worked as responsible officers in State service and leaving the traditional occupation of their ancestors. some of them joined movement for Statehood of Manipur and represented their group in important decision making process. In the State Legislative Assembly the group has contributed its quota of politicians and M.L. As.

An assessment of Christian perspective

After the fall of Moghul empire European traders and missionaries crosscrossed Indian territories in pursuit of their work. In 1704, six men from Italy reached northern Hindustan enroute to Central Asia, viz. Palestine, Mesopotamia, Persia, Kabul and down to the Gangetic plain of Oudh and Bihar. They had been assigned by the sacred congregation of the propagation of the Faith in Rome to the task of christianising north India, Nepal and Tibet. After experiencing enormous difficulties of travel, three of

them reached Patna, took to the road, leading north towards the Himalayas and behind. They succeeded in crossing trackless jungles, material foothills, snowy passes and reached the barren plateau. These three and others who followed them established small missions in Nepal and Tibet.

From 1707-1796 the Jesuits/the Capuchin Fathers did missionary work in the Nepal valley in the towns of Bhatyaon, Patan and Kathaamandu. Their work consisted of language study, writing of books in the vernacular, teaching the Christian faith, medical service, education and baptising the group of believers. At the end of this time the Nepal valley with its small city-states was conquered by the King of Gorkha and annexed to his kingdom. The Christians were expelled from his kingdom. They migrated down to the plains and settled in the Kingdom of Bethiad (in Bihar).

It was the firm policy of the authority to bid Christianity to live in the country. But the missionaries continued their works from outside the borders. This involved many individuals and mission agencies. They form bits and pieces of the ongoing history of mission here.

In 1800 the mission was becoming a noticeable and growing movement. The team was associated with the personality and work of William Carey in Calcutta. Noticeable works were the whole publication of the Bible in 1914 in Nepali language; selling and distributing of the works continued for about 100 years from the border areas through contact with the people.

Their works were restricted to give medical treatment to officials and their households. The converts had to live outside the country.

In 1930, Nepal border Fellowship came into existence for intensification of works. By the mid 1970 the people were still not permitted to change the religion. The constitution says, "Follow the religion of their forefathers." Missions have applied for His Majesty's Government to allow them to do some form of service to the people. The Christian Shanti Sangh form a part of the first entry of Christian into Nepal after the fall of the Ranas. Meanwhile ten of the foreign missions along the border decided to join together as one organisation for this purpose. So they formed a Unity Mission and as such entered into agreement with the Government.

Enter the Minnionaries

In 1951 following the change of Government and fall of Rana rule they were allowed to enter into Nepal to do social work but not to evangelize. Nepalese who had been Christians but not living outside the State were permitted to return home and practise their religion. Nepalese who were not Christians were still forbidden to change their religion. The Christians were scattered but proved small congregations and built two Churches. The Nepalese Christian Fellowship has brought them all together once a year.

Conclusion

I now conclude the paper with the following observations: (1) Nepal owes much to India from the cultural and religious point of view. Indian culture affected the extensive literature, arts, crafts, sculptures. It may be that Nepal has so far not given back to India. According to historical reality the relation has always been a two way traffic, never a one way affair if we studied minutely. Indian culture and Christianity went from India but we overlooked such elements as Nepal's position as a trade route, rice, forest resources, sheep wool blanket as recorded in **Arthashastra** of Kautilya, Khukri culture (curved knife symbolising Gorkha valour), fire military virtues, winning of Victoria crosses by the member of Indian army during World War II, conquest of Mt. Everest by Tanjing Sherpa.

(2) M.M. Haraprasad Shastri discovered charya songs (chacha songs containing elements of Bengali, Maithili, etc.), Sanskrit mss including Yogasukta, a medical treatise from Nepal, some of mss canonical works on Buddhism, tantrism and Veda lost to us during the Muslim period are recovered from Nepal by eminent Indologists and Nepali scholars. The works of Nepalese scholars who had done for Indian culture and thought surprised us. We benefit ourselves and the future generations from studying these texts. We do think that the young Buddhist Nepalese will be awakening. "The saying of Chinese classic goes : "The schools have to preserve in order to shoulder the heavy responsibilities and march a long way ahead." The moral of the same now falls upon all.

(3) Nepali wisdom and diplomacy of its stable government and help to the British for independence where resourceful Indian states were falling like overripen fruits into the lap of Britain-are lessons worthy of being learnt by us. They are landmarks in the history of Asia.

(4) Religious policy of Nepal Government, i.e., anti-conversion of Nepal Government is not without any merit in the present democratic context. 'Yes, any one has the liberty to practise his own religion, but he may not change it and no one may convert another.' This, in fact, resulted in adjusting freedom of worship with modern secular trends, love of ancient heritage under the wise statesmanship of Nepali rulers and the public.

Notes and Reference

1. **Bhavishyottara Purana,** section on saligrames.
2. Prof. S.K. Chatterji, **Kirata-Iona-Kriti,** Calcutta, 1974 pp. 63-83
3. Nepali soldiers under the British officers in Manipur are found in the war among the princes and Anglo-Manipur War, 1891. Massage of Maharaja Bodhachandra with Ishwari Devi of Ramanagar and their assumption of power as the Maharaja and Maharaja in customary manner and her candidature for last Lok Sabha election will be found in Cheitharoni Kumbaba (Royal chronicle) and official files maintained by the govt. of Manipur.